No. 36

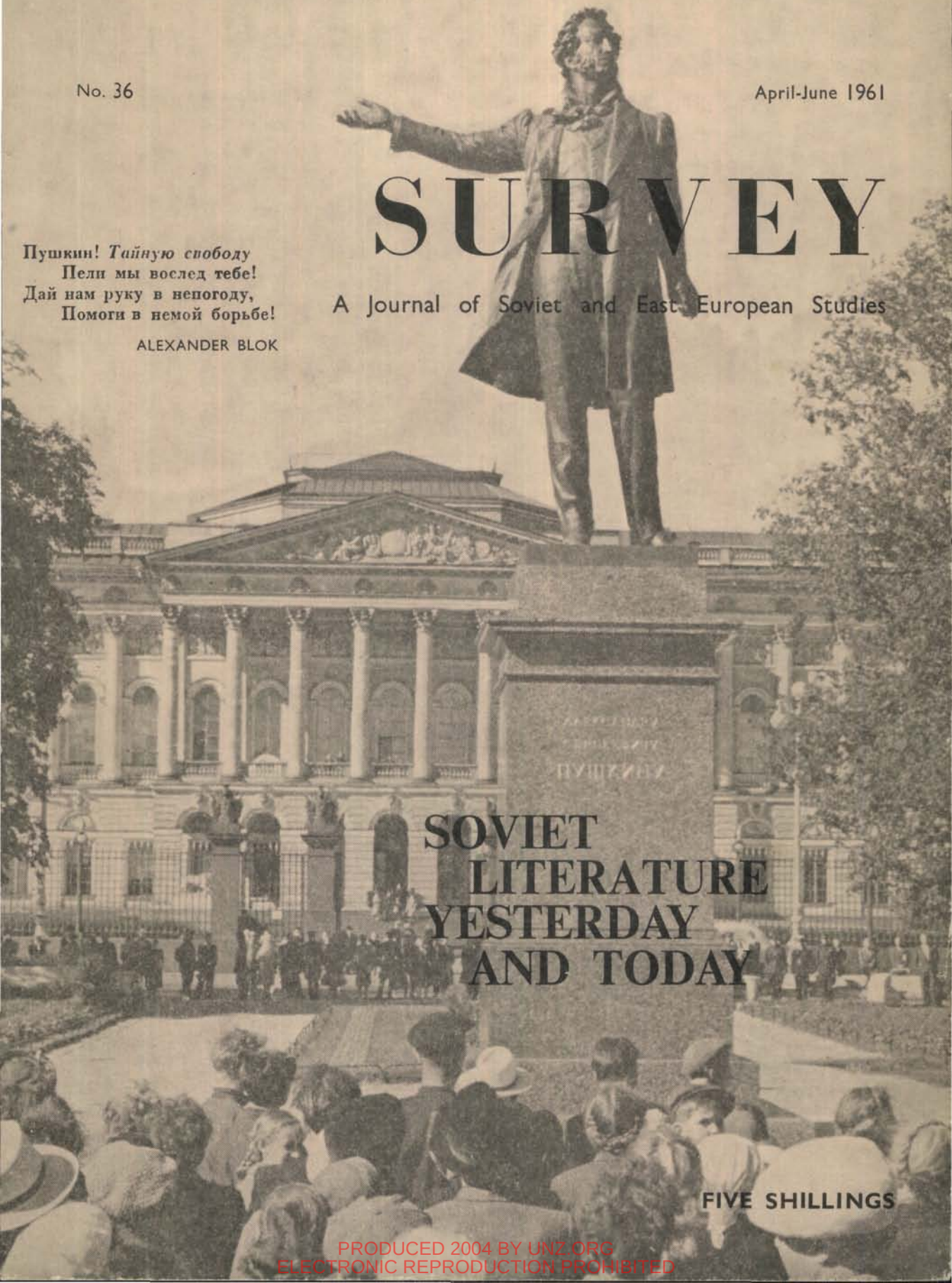
April-June 1961

SURVEY

A Journal of Soviet and East European Studies

Пушкин! *Тайную свободу*
Пели мы вослед тебе!
Дай нам руку в непогоду,
Помоги в немой борьбе!

ALEXANDER BLOK



SOVIET LITERATURE YESTERDAY AND TODAY

FIVE SHILLINGS

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

TO OUR READERS

FROM the autumn of this year, SURVEY will be published six times a year, instead of quarterly as at present. Details about subscription rates will be given in a later issue.

Owing to lack of space, a number of contributions on literary subjects have had to be held over. They will appear in our next issue.

SECOND CLASS POSTAGE RATES PAID AT NEW YORK, N.Y.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

SURVEY

A Journal of Soviet and East European Studies

No. 36 April-June 1961

Editor: *Walter Z. Laqueur*

Associate Editor: *Leopold Labedz*

Gene Sosin ..... *Talks with Soviet Writers* 3

D. L. Fanger ..... *Dostoevsky Today* 13

Herman Ermolaev ..... *Sholokhov Thirty Years After* 20

Jaroslav Dresler ..... *Kafka and the Communists* 27

Barbara Bode ..... *1960: The Literary Harvest* 34

Vera Alexandrova ..... *Voices of Youth* 44

George Gibian ..... *New Trends in the Novel* 49

George Luckyj ..... *Multinational Literature* 56

G. B. Morris ..... *Writing in Central Asia* 65

C. Szmeruk ..... *Soviet Jewish Literature* 71

Ernest J. Simmons ..... *The Origins of Literary Control* 78

Max Hayward ..... *Pilnyak and Zamyatin* 85

Edward J. Brown ..... *Voronsky and Pereval* 92

Hugh McLean ..... *Zoshchenko's Unfinished Novel* 99

Views and Reviews ..... *Postscript on Pasternak* 106

A Note on Soviet Satire 110

The Prodigal's Return 114

'Three, Seven, Ace' 117

Alexander Blok 119

Our Contributors 12

Editorial and business offices, Summit House, 1–2 Langham Place, London, W.1.
Subscription rates £1 0 0 or 3 dollars a year, post free. Single copies, one dollar.
American Distributors: Eastern News Distributors Inc., 306 West 11th Street, New York 14, with whom subscriptions may be entered.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE POLITICAL QUARTERLY

The only journal of its kind devoted exclusively to the serious and lengthy discussion of every kind of political and social problem—national and international.

While daily and weekly papers give a kaleidoscopic view of political facts and happenings, THE POLITICAL QUARTERLY is able to give a deeper perspective and a more profound understanding of these problems. This is particularly true of the regular special numbers devoted entirely to one subject—*The Civil Service, The Middle East, The Revolt against Reason, Trade Union Problems, Pressure Groups in Britain, British Attitudes to Politics* and *The Labour Party*.

THE POLITICAL QUARTERLY is essential to all those who take politics seriously; an ever increasing number of ordinary people whose lives are vitally affected by the complicated political and social problems of modern society. It is also essential reading for all those whose professions are concerned with politics; civil servants, members of parliament, local government officials, lawyers and university teachers.

Editors: W. A. ROBSON & T. E. M. McKITTERICK

Quarterly 8s. 6d. Annual Subscription 35s.

STEVENS

AN OUTSTANDING BOOK FROM COLUMBIA

THE RUSSIAN INTELLIGENTSIA

Edited by Richard Pipes

A wide range of authoritative opinion on the intellectual life in Tsarist and Soviet Russia. Leading scholars provide valuable insight into the thought of Russian writers, scientists, and philosophers. They discuss the historical evolution and structure of the Russian intelligentsia, Soviet university life, ideology and science in the Soviet Union, and other topics. There is a comparative study of the intelligentsia in Communist China and Spain. Translations of important documents include the letter to Boris Pasternak from the editor of *Novyi Mir*, detailing their reasons for rejecting DR. ZHIVAGO. $4.50

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY PRESS

2960 Broadway, New York 27, New York

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

From a Moscow Diary

TALKS WITH SOVIET WRITERS

Gene Sosin

MY trip to the USSR was made possible thanks to a travel grant from the Social Science Research Council. The project consisted primarily of first-hand observation of Soviet theatres for children, in order to finish a book based on my doctoral dissertation. These theatres are subsidised by the state and supervised by the Ministry of Culture; they are especially designed for young people under sixteen, for according to Soviet law children below that age are not allowed to attend adult theatres. Children's theatres are *not* amateur and are *not* run by children: they are operated by professional adult actors, directors, and educators who make it their career to produce plays for the young people of the Soviet Union in most of the major cities. Esthetic training and ideological indoctrination through the medium of live drama is one of the most effective methods which the regime uses in its comprehensive system of extracurricular education. Youngsters usually attend plays in school groups with their teachers; the liaison between theatre and school is close, since each theatre has a 'pedagogical section' staffed with teachers who work with older children (the *aktiv*) in each school to sell tickets (70 per cent of sales are made in the schools; prices range from 2–8 rubles) and advertise the programme. Theatres run on a repertory basis, so that scores of plays are running throughout the country during the September to July season, playing to millions of spectators and also over radio and TV in adaptations for those media.

I spent many hours in the audience of these theatres, sitting with boys and girls from seven to sixteen. I was able to observe their spontaneous reactions to what took place on stage: in the dimly-lit auditorium, as they watched attentively, they were caught off-guard, they were relaxed, they were not trying to impress a foreigner as they might do in a formal classroom situation. What kind of plays do they see and how do they react to them?

They see (1) fantasies, (2) classics, (3) historical dramas, and (4) contemporary works. Folktales and fairy tales from old Russia and the West (*Konek gorbunok* [The Little Humpbacked Horse] and Andersen's *The Snow Queen* are examples of both genres) are magnificently staged with casts of up to fifty (all members of the troupe), original music (played by the permanent orchestra of the theatres). I saw classics such as Gogol's *Dead Souls* and *Inspector-General*, Chekhov's *Cherry Orchard*, and Ostrovsky's *The Storm* produced uncut, just as they are played for adults. The acting is first-class: many of the artists are among the most highly honoured actors and actresses of the country. They are secure in their jobs, having grown up in the 'collective' of the theatre from the time they left the institute to their fifties and sixties. Many of them, of course, leave the children's theatres for theatres and films for adults. (Nikolai Cherkassov of *Alexander Nevsky* is perhaps the most famous case.) But others told me that they prefer to play for children, for they enjoy moulding still unformed personalities, and developing the artistic taste of their young public. Shakespeare, Molière, Dickens, Twain, Lope de Vega, Calderon, and other masters of Western literature and drama are familiar to Soviet children. Studying these works in school is exciting when you can see them come alive in the theatre.

The children with whom I sat were delighted not only by fairy tales and classics, but also by historical and contemporary dramas. Take, for example, *In the Name of the Revolution*. I saw this play twice—once in the Kiev children's theatre in the Ukrainian language, and the following week, on Lenin's birthday, in the Moscow Theatre of the Young Spectator. In both cities the children openly expressed their sympathies for Lenin and his right-hand man, Felix Edmundovich Dzerzhinsky, head of the Cheka, the first Soviet political police. The play justifies the Red terror during the early days of the

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

revolution by showing the bourgeois and socialist-revolutionaries as contemptible villains, dressed in furs and finery and living comfortably while they sabotage the workers and peasants regime. Several times during the play, the children broke into applause and cheered the 'good guys' (though I never heard them hiss the 'bad guys'). In Kiev a three-and-a-half-year-old tow-head sat on his grandmother's lap next to me. When grandma asked him, 'Who was Lenin?' Seryozha answered: 'They killed Lenin; he defended his homeland'. (*Ubili Lenina. On zaschchitil svoyu rodinu.*) In the Moscow version of the play, use was also made of revolutionary songs. Slides flashed on the curtain between scenes showing the decrees, as published in the press of the time, which called for death to the enemies of the regime. The dramatic effect of such a play as *In the Name of the Revolution* is heightened as the cast of characters contains not only adult heroes such as Lenin, but children who help the revolutionary leaders conquer their enemies, and with whom the audience sympathises. Let me stress again that the actors are all professional adults—even the ones who play juvenile roles. Actresses in their twenties play ten-year-old boys with consummate skill and often fool the audience, including me!

A contemporary play I saw was called *On Whitman Avenue* and was translated from English (it played on Broadway several years ago). It concerns a Negro family in an unidentified American town: they move into a white neighbourhood, thanks to friends who sublet them the upstairs apartment. But the other neighbours force the Negroes to move, and in so doing destroy the family of whites who befriended them. The drama was produced with Russians in blackface, all roles were excellently acted, and from the reaction of the young audience the ideological effect was maximal. *Suvorovites* is a play glorifying cadets at a Soviet military academy which turns out future officers. Patriotism is the basic theme: there is even a graduation scene which ends the play that shows the students one by one kneeling to kiss the Soviet flag as they come up for their diplomas.

The children's theatre transforms abstract ideas taught in school into three-dimensional images which have a great emotional impact.

Impressions of Soviet Children

I FOUND Soviet boys and girls warm and friendly, disciplined and courteous, intensely curious about meeting an American. Literally scores of Soviet youngsters read the 'pen-pal' letters I had brought with me from American high-school students, and were delighted to learn that American teenagers are studying Russian. Many of them begged me to write down my address so that they could send letters. I scribbled my name and address so many times that I was sorry I hadn't had cards printed before leaving home. In a park one day, a little girl of nine with a piccolo voice said what others often repeated: 'Please send regards to the American children'.

During one intermission at the Moscow Theatre of the Young Spectator I chatted with Lyuba, a pig-tailed girl of about 11. When I offered her some American chewing gum, other kids began to crowd around for a handout. I decided to appoint Lyuba as my deputy and turned over the package and a half of Beechies for her to distribute. She had already taken two pieces for herself and was handing out the rest when I became involved in a conversation with another child. The third bell rang and the youngsters scurried back into the auditorium for the next act. (The rush reminds one of *Cimmaron*!) I saw Lyuba and caught up with her: 'Did you give it all out?' 'Yes', she replied. 'Where's yours?' I asked. 'Oh, there were too many children so I gave up my pieces'. I said I was sorry that I didn't have another pack on me and regretted that she didn't have one piece left. She smiled and in a completely unaffected way said simply: 'You have to think of others before yourself'.

Communist moral education teaches that the collective takes precedence over the individual. Although it is difficult and dangerous to generalise on the basis of my brief contacts with Soviet children, it seems to me that constant exposure to this kind of indoctrination must inevitably produce some results. I have always wondered, for example, to what extent Soviet children look up to Pavlik Morozov as a hero.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

(Pavlik was thirteen and an ardent Pioneer during the early thirties; he denounced his father as an enemy of the people and was himself killed by his grandfather; the Soviet regime has immortalised him in poems, plays, monuments; libraries, parks, and kolkhozes are given his name.) Shortly after my arrival in Moscow, I visited the 'Park named Pavlik Morozov' near the Krasnopresnenskaya Station of the Metro. I walked through bleak back streets which contrasted sharply with the tall apartment building at Vosstaniye Square nearby.

When I came to the park I saw a bronze monument to Pavlik in the centre. The boy stood defiantly and proudly, flag in hand, with a real red neckerchief tied around him (part of the Pioneer uniform). Three little girls passed by, and I asked them about the boy on the pedestal. They promptly told me the whole story. When they were finished I said: 'But to denounce one's own father is a pretty serious thing, isn't it?' One of the girls, a twelve-year-old, answered with the same lack of affectation and simplicity which Lyuba had displayed: 'Love for one's homeland is stronger than love for one's father' (*lyubov k rodine peresilivaet lyubov k otsu*).

I don't think the girl was saying this in a conscious parroting of the official line. Her delivery was so spontaneous as to convey that she felt it was perfectly natural to put your country ahead of your narrower family loyalties. When one considers that most of the waking hours of Soviet schoolchildren are spent in some state-supervised acitivity: school, youth group, youth camp, extracurricular activities operated under the Ministries of Culture or Education and under the watchful eye of the party and the Komsomol, etc., it is no wonder that some of the official attitudes and values sink in. Little is known about the role of parents as a corrective to the state's educational aims, but studies such as the Harvard book on the Soviet social system have pointed out that in Stalin's time parents rarely risked challenging the party. Do they dare flout that authority today?

The A. A. Zhdanov Palace of Young Pioneers in Leningrad is actually the former Anichkov palace, where 'in pre-revolutionary times the court nobility assembled at resplendent balls', as the guidebook informs us. Nowadays about 13,000 Leningrad schoolchildren regularly visit the Palace to pursue activities of their own choice, under the supervision of adult counsellors. Thus, I saw children after school engaged in amateur theatricals, music, geology, chess and painting. In the high-ceilinged chess room, youngsters sat scribbling in their notebooks problems they were working out on the chessboards to discuss with the adult leader after the game; photos of famous Soviet and foreign champions stared at them from the wall, as well as an imposing plaque which ran from ceiling to floor and reminded everyone that Marx and Lenin played chess in their leisure time to train their nerves and will. In the geological museum, a couple of early teenage girls took me around the impressive collection of rocks gathered by the children themselves in several summers of expeditions to all parts of the land. In the 'theatre of youth creativity' the adult leader, a man in his forties, explained that 160 children spend two hours a day, three days a week, rotating jobs in acting, costuming, making props, set designing, etc. They put on thirteen plays in March alone. He took me into a room where some girls were working on costumes. When we entered (it was without warning) all of them immediately dropped everything, snapped to attention, and their leader, a girl about 12, stepped forward, saluted my companion, and rattled off a report of their current activities. They all stood stiff until he put them at ease. Youthful creativity is encouraged, but always accompanied by discipline and obedience to authority.

In Leningrad late one afternoon, I walked alone down Mokhovaya Street in the poorer part of town, which sharply contrasted with the splendour of the guided tour sights such as the Hermitage. The apartment buildings and stores were badly in need of a paint job; a line of people stood on one corner waiting to buy some *kvas* (made from fermented bread). Some carried tin buckets, others would take the common glass from the fellow ahead and drink it down on the spot. In a nearby *atelier*, where you can have clothing made to order either by bringing in material bought elsewhere or buying what is available at the shop, people were being

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

fitted (it takes about a month from the time you pick out your favourite style from the pattern book until you go through two fittings; a man's suit costs on the average about 900–1,300 rubles, including the price of the material). I also went into an elementary school on Mokhovaya: the 196th Incomplete Middle School (a 7-year school). You enter through an archway from the street into a miserable-looking courtyard, up well-worn stairs and into an old three- or four-storey building, which reminds you of New York public schools you attended in the twenties and thirties. The place was clean inside, liberally decorated with busts, slogans, and bulletin boards. On the latter you could find pictures of top students, drawings, and other intramural communications. One board held several compositions by pupils. A third grader named Tatiana Ryabenko wrote this: 'I am a young Pioneer of the Soviet Union, and before my comrades' faces I solemnly promise to love ardently the Soviet Motherland, and to live, study, and struggle in the way that the great Lenin bequeathed and the Communist Party teaches.' I think this is the standard oath which Young Pioneers take when they enter the organisation at the age of nine. Thereafter, they formally greet one another with this exchange: 'For the struggle in the cause of the Communist Party, be ready'. Answer: 'Always ready'. It was already after 6 p.m. but classes were still going on, since many schools operate on a two-shift system. I wandered into one class just before the lesson was to begin and asked the teacher, a middle-aged woman, whether I could stand at the back and observe. At first she consented, but when I got to the back of the room and the stares of the children followed me, she probably had second thoughts about her classroom discipline, or perhaps about the irregularity of the whole business, for she asked me to go downstairs to obtain the principal's permission. Unfortunately, he had already left for the day.

Twelve-year-old Sasha sat beside me one evening in the Leningrad children's theatre. He had come with a group of boys his age, but detached himself from them to join me soon after I started chatting with them. During the show he offered me a piece of candy wrapped in paper; I said I really didn't want any, but he insisted, adding that it only cost 40 copecks. During intermission, he wanted to buy me something to eat and I had to be firm with him to restrain his hospitality. Later he handed me a pre-revolutionary silver ruble with Nikolai II's face engraved on the obverse and the double eagle with the date 1897 on the reverse. Sasha told me he wanted me to have it as a souvenir. I finally accepted after protesting, because he undoubtedly would have been hurt if I hadn't taken it. I told him that I would give it to my own son in America. I wrote down my name and address and offered the ballpoint pen to him; it was his turn now to protest, but he finally took it when I assured him I had others (I'd brought along about 50 and spread joy and gladness among the children by handing them out—as unostentatiously as possible so as not to be trampled to death). At one point during our conversation, Sasha said, apropos of nothing: 'We're going to have Communism in 1965, and I'm going to fly to the moon with my mother'. He was a real good kid and I hope he makes it.

Portrait Sketches

YURI, a student about 22, living in the dormitory at a polytechnical institute in Kiev, talked with me during an intermission at the Kiev Dramatic Theatre. When I told him I was an American, he could scarcely believe it. He came from the Southern Ukraine and said that he never had met an American before. I had to show him my passport to convince him. After the show we walked for a while on Lenin Street. We spoke about American literature; he had read Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath*, Fast's *Last Frontier*, Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* and *An American Tragedy*. From literature I steered the conversation into broadcasting, starting with Music USA, VOA, trying by slow stages to elicit from him the name of Radio Liberation. He didn't offer it himself, so I asked him whether he had ever heard of it. He said yes, though he did not remember ever hearing it himself. However, he commented that 'forbidden fruit was always interesting' and it was obvious that he was very curious about ideas from abroad.

BORIS, a tall, affable Intourist guide in Kiev,

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

also about 22, took me through the famous monastery (*Kievsko-Pecherskaya Lavra*) one morning. As we were walking through the dark passage, our way lighted only by thin orange tapers we had bought from old monks at the entrance, I pulled out a 5 and 10 cent store pencil-shaped flashlight and shone it ahead of us. Boris was fascinated and asked to look at it. 'We don't have anything like that here', he remarked. When we entered a small alcove in the cave we saw some old women worshipping in front of the ikons. From time to time they whispered 'Hospodi', knelt and kissed the ikons. Boris was disgusted and said this was very unsanitary. Later I noticed that the automatic soda dispensers on the main streets of Kiev required you to take a dirty glass and give it a perfunctory spray before putting in your coin for a soft carbonated drink. I pointed out to another guide, Irina, that I considered this every bit as unsanitary as the scene with the old women which had disgusted Boris. She laughed and admitted I was right.

VLADIMIR, a man in his early thirties, sat beside me one evening at the Moscow Art Theatre watching Pogodin's play about the last years of Lenin, *Third Pathetic* (the last of the trilogy which begins with the famous *Kremlin Chimes*). We talked briefly during intermissions, and he told me he worked at the VINTI—the All-Union Institute of Scientific and Technical Information, where he read American technical journals (he knew some English). He named some chemical magazines which I had never heard of. Vladimir earns 1,100 rubles a month less taxes. His wife earns 300, and he proudly announced that she would soon get a 200 ruble raise, which he considered to be a big deal. He rarely went to the theatre, and had bought only one ticket in the parterre, leaving his wife at home. I told him that I planned to see *Three Sisters* later in April and he volunteered to get two tickets for us to see it together. He actually did buy the tickets and met me once again in front of my hotel after a telephone conversation (he called me up), but I had to change the date and asked him to call me again when I got back from Leningrad and Kiev. Although he was extremely friendly during our brief meeting, he never called me again.

VICTOR SERGEYEVICH ROZOV. I spoke briefly with Rozov in his new apartment not far from the Dynamo Sports Stadium on the outskirts of Moscow. Rozov is most famous in the West as the writer of the Cannes Festival prize-winning film, 'The Cranes Are Flying'. He is equally famous inside the USSR as a playwright, holding the undisputed place as the top dramatist for children and adolescents. (His play, *In Search of Joy*, originally written for the juvenile stage, is now also playing in the adult theatre.) Rozov probably earns at least 30,000 rubles for every play, plus a cut (about 5 per cent) of the box office receipts of every performance (this is the usual procedure with established dramatists). Thus he is comfortably situated—and his apartment shows it.

A young woman from the Foreign Committee of the Union of Soviet Writers named Frida Anatolievna Lurye arranged for my visit to Rozov, and when I arrived she was already in his apartment in the new row of buildings called the House of Writers, located beyond Gorky St. on a side street known as Second Aeroport. Even the front door to Rozov's apartment was unusual for Moscow: it had a gleaming Yale-type lock. Other apartments, public buildings, and hotels usually have crude locks. The apartment had a good-sized vestibule, a big dining-room and an equally comfortable study (these were the only rooms I saw). I would guess that the study where we talked measured about 10 × 20 ft. Rozov was seated behind a handsome new desk, with bookcases and modern furniture. He had good Georgian wines and Moscow's best chocolates to serve his guests. (His furniture was the only kind I saw in the USSR which measured up to what was being shown in the 'model apartment' at the New York Coliseum Soviet Exhibition.)

Rozov is not a well man; he had a serious heart attack last year and even in late April he was still weak; he planned to return the following week to the hospital to stay there for a while. He is about 45, warm, direct, good-humoured and sensitive. He said that he preferred writing for children because he felt that he was helping to shape their personalities, where writing for adults was less likely to have such a lasting effect. He was interested in

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Tennessee Williams and I was able to tell him about *Sweet Bird of Youth* which I had seen just before leaving for Moscow. He also listened to Frida Anatolievna's description of *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (she was very familiar with the plot) and expressed his amazement that a playwright should be so preoccupied with abnormal people. I said that perhaps Williams found them more interesting to write about than average people, but Rozov said he thought such an interest was pathological. His curiosity made me feel, though, that he would not turn down an opportunity to see Williams' plays.

I left with Frida Anatolievna after a short stay, so as not to tire Rozov. An old lady served us a snack before we left; she was not introduced to me, so I assumed that she was not a member of his family, but a servant. Miss Lurye expressed her great desire to get more paperback books from America and urged me to send books to her Foreign Committee in return for which she would send Soviet publications. I believe this is worth trying out as a means of giving Soviet writers greater access to literature from the West, assuming that the Foreign Committee really intends to distribute them.

Natalia Satz

NATALIA ILYINICHNA SATZ is the daughter of Ilya Satz, one of the founders of the Moscow Art Theatre. In 1918, aged 15, Natalia was chosen to head a sub-section of the Moscow Soviet's department of education in charge of children's theatre and music. In 1921, she founded the Moscow Theatre for Children and for the next decade this talented and energetic young woman was a leading figure in the Russian theatre, which flourished especially during the twenties and early thirties before 'socialist realism' sterilised Soviet art. During the purges of 1937–38, Satz was removed from her theatre and arrested. She spent the next 18 years in exile, most of it in Kazakhstan. When I met her in Moscow, in front of the same Moscow Art Theatre which her father helped to found, I saw a woman of 56, energetic, spirited, quick-witted and ironic, proud and forthright. She had been in Moscow about a year and a half since her return from exile. I tried to get her to talk about her arrest but she flatly refused, saying that what was past is past. Her present job is that of the chief of the section for youth programmes of the All-Russian Concert Tours, under the Theatrical Society. I was struck by two things in particular during our short meeting, which took the form of a fast walk around the Kuznetsky Most–Gorky St. section. First, in the midst of our conversation she suddenly noticed a woman passing by carrying a reticule filled with oranges. She cried aloud 'apelsiny!' and dashed after the woman to find out where she could buy some. (Incidentally, I priced oranges at 2.50 rubles apiece.) The other incident occurred when I asked if she would like to see those passages concerning her in my doctoral dissertation, which I was carrying in a briefcase with me. She said she would, but was reluctant to stand in the street to look at it, and insisted that we step into a store. Her excuse was that someone might think I was trying to sell her something illegally. I met her again before I left Moscow, when I stopped by her office near the Metropole. I came to present her a brochure about the children's theatre in America. She said something about my really knowing the Soviet children's theatre. I said: 'Coming from you, that's a compliment'. She said unsmilingly, 'Yes, from me that is a compliment'. In other words, here was a woman with profound pride in her accomplishments during the earlier period of Soviet history who survived 18 years of exile to return to active work again in Moscow. (Imagine what it must have meant for the daughter of a famous Russian theatrical figure, the niece of Lunacharsky's wife, the 'fair-haired girl' of the early Russian theatre, to have lived in Kazakhstan for so long. To be sure, she had been active after the war in theatres in Alma Ata, but Moscow is Moscow.) Whatever resentments she must have harboured during those years, she seemed to be concentrating on the present and future, picking up where she had been forced to leave off almost two decades ago. She said she was just finishing a book on her role in the development of the Soviet theatre. It will be interesting to see what place, if any, Meyerhold is given in her account of the twenties and early thirties.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Leonid Makaryev

MAKARYEV, in his mid-sixties, is one of Leningrad's most talented theatrical personalities. He is a triple-threat man, excelling in writing, acting, and directing since the early twenties. In addition to his work as chief *regisseur* of the Leningrad children's theatre, Makaryev is also a professor in the Leningrad Theatrical Institute named after Ostrovsky, where he heads the department of acting. The significance of this position can be understood if one remembers that there are only four or five theatrical institutes in the USSR responsible for turning out the future artists of the Soviet theatre. Igor Ilyinsky, one of the top Soviet stage and screen stars, is a product of Markaryev's Leningrad school (Ilyinsky will be remembered as the stuffy and comic Party functionary in the movie, *Carnival Night*); in Moscow today he is playing the old peasant, Akim, in the Maly Theatre's version of *The Power of Darkness*—the best individual acting performance I saw on the Soviet stage. Makaryev, as a Leningrader and teacher of Ilyinsky, is naturally proud of the local boy who made good in Moscow. But he disapproves of the Maly version of Tolstoy's drama, which he feels is too upbeat in its emphasis on the father's piety and the redemption of his murderer-son. (Makaryev calls the play *The Power of Light*.) He was as hospitable to me as his Moscow colleagues had predicted. Through him I met the principal members of the Leningrad children's theatre and spent a lot of time discussing their work with them. Makaryev is a good friend of Michael Redgrave and knows English well enough to read it. He was pleased with my gift to him of Eric Bentley's selections of Western European drama and Francis Fergusson's study of the theatre, all Anchor paperbacks. In discussing acting technique with him I brought up Freudian psychology and asked him whether he was familiar with it; Makaryev said no, but he would be glad to read anything I sent him. He said that he wanted very much for me to come to his apartment, but that his wife was sick at that time. Instead, he invited me to the dress rehearsal of *Hamlet* at the Theatrical Institute. The play, in Lozinsky's not Pasternak's translation, was the *diplomnaya rabota* of the fifth year graduating class of actors, i.e., part of the students' requirements for the diploma consisted in performing in the play. When I arrived at 9 p.m., the rehearsal was well under way. In a small auditorium of only about 100 seats, about 20 of which were occupied, I sat for 4 solid hours watching Makaryev direct his talented students. Hamlet, Claudius, and Gertrude were particularly good; the young girl played the queen with poignancy and poise—her father had flown in all the way from Novosibirsk that day to watch her rehearse, and was due to leave the next day. Makaryev predicted great things for her, and judging by the scenes I saw I would concur. He sat in the middle of the audience and frequently stopped a scene to bounce on to the stage and direct a bit of business which made all the difference in its nuance. I remember, for example, how the young man playing Polonius was corrected by Makaryev when he failed to look at the cloud when Hamlet said: 'Do you see yonder cloud that's almost in the shape of a camel?' Polonius kept staring at Hamlet, humouring him in what was clearly madness. Makaryev instructed him to look at the 'cloud' through his lorgnette. Polonius objected: 'But Leonid Fyodorovich, the clouds have nothing to do with it (*delo ne v oblakakh*)'. Makaryev told him to try it; it improved the scene considerably. The actors' general attitude towards their professor was one of affection and respect; several times it was necessary for him to shout above the continued hubbub on stage: 'When I'm talking, I want quiet!' But there was respect and affection in his own attitude towards them, along with his tone of authority. I regret that I was unable to speak to any of the actors, because it was late when they broke up and Makaryev called a cab to take him home via my hotel, where he dropped me off. Although he deprecated the rehearsal, he was not displeased with his students. They impressed me with their perseverance and obvious dedication to their work.

Samuil Marshak

I spent an evening with Marshak in the cluttered study of his modest apartment on Moscow's Chkalov Street. The dean of Soviet

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

writers for children is well past seventy and not in the best of health, but he enjoyed chatting for hours and reading aloud from his works. Russian children and grown-ups love Marshak the way the British and Americans love Milne, Lewis Carroll, and Mother Goose. They recite his verses before they can read, then take a 'merry journey' through the alphabet with his picture books; later they delight in such poems as 'The Muddlehead' ('Parding your beggon,/Kister Monductor,/ I'm off for a week's vacation;/I stop you to beg your cramway tar/As soon as we reach the station . . .'). Through Marshak's translations they learn foreign children's verse, e.g., 'The House That Jack Built'. As they approach maturity, he opens for them the treasury of world poetry with brilliant translations of Shakespeare's sonnets (all of them), Burns (over seventy-five poems), Blake, Keats, Wordsworth and others. (Marshak lived in England before World War I, studied at London University, wandered on foot through the countryside, went to sea with fishermen, lived in a forest school in South Wales and soon began to translate the folk ballads he heard.) Russians also appreciate Marshak's witty political satire in verse; the most famous is *Mister Twister,* where he pokes fun at a bigoted American plutocrat.

During most of the evening we sat at his desk, but he would not allow me to leave without sharing wine and *zakuski* in his small dining-room. The apartment seemed alive with the past. On the wall was a portrait of V. V. Stasov, the critic, who befriended the young Marshak, and through whom he met the painter Repin, as well as Chaliapin and Gorky. Seated at the dining-room table, he reminisced about Chaliapin and read me a short elegy he had written on the death of his friend. (I would have liked to discuss with Marshak the death of Maxim Gorky—a story still shrouded in mystery.)

Samuil Yakovlevich told me that I was free to translate any of his works. He said that he did not expect any royalties because the Soviet Union does not adhere to the Universal Copyright Convention. Rather, he is interested in good renditions of his work. He was especially unhappy about an English version of the play 'Twelve Months', his wonderful *skazka* (fairy tale) about the brother months who switch seasons so that the young heroine may gather snowdrops for the capricious queen. 'I ask only one thing', he added, 'If you translate anything of mine, please love it.' I promised him that I would.

Before leaving Moscow I returned for a brief visit, and Marshak presented me with autographed volumes of his collected works. He also urged me to write down for him some children's verse which my wife and I had composed, and which he had delighted in hearing during our first meeting. Marshak smiled with pleasure when he read my inscription: 'To the youngest man I have met in the Soviet Union.'

Ilya Ehrenburg

ILYA EHRENBURG was sitting in a stiff-backed armchair when I entered his study in an apartment building near downtown Moscow. He was leaving for Scandinavia the next day, and had a busy schedule, but welcomed an opportunity to speak with me and my companion, Monroe Price from Yale. We sat on a daybed in the narrow room (perhaps ten feet by twelve), and as we talked we examined his schoolboy-sized desk, the pot of begonias on the window sill, and the Japanese masks and hundreds of books that lined the shelves to the ceiling.

Ehrenburg, like Alexei Tolstoy, was one of those Russian intellectuals who returned to the Soviet Union after several years in Western Europe following the revolution. In Paris, in 1921, Ehrenburg had written a political novel called *Julio Jurenito*, a brilliant satire on the West as well as on Soviet Communism. Once back in Russia, however, he became an important propagandist for the Stalin regime, and during World War II his voice had been among the loudest demanding vengeance on the Germans. He survived the years of Stalin's persecution of the Jews—how he did so is a matter of some controversy—and in 1953–54 his novel *The Thaw* gave both name and sanction to the period of literary revival which followed Stalin's death. His essay on Stendhal, published in the magazine *Inostrannaya Literatura* in 1956, provided the aesthetic rationale for such critical novelists as Vladimir Dudintsev by

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

arguing that a novel must be like a mirror set in the middle of life's roads, capturing all its bumps and rocks as well as the smooth surfaces. More recently, he has published an essay on Chekhov which, in similar terms, urges freedom for creative writers from political restraints and imposed literary political formulas.

Ehrenburg is slight, about five feet six inches. He looks his 70 years, for his green eyes are tired, with heavy pouches; deep wrinkles curve downward from his prominent nostrils; his hair is two-toned, steel-grey and white, combed straight back and thin at the top. He wore a well-tailored solid grey wool jacket, a blue shirt, and blue-grey tie with diagonal stripes—all in the best Western taste. He sat at ease, one leg crossed over the other, showing brown-checked socks and brown loafers. We conversed mostly in Russian, and at times in German and French.

We talked first about *Doctor Zhivago*. Ehrenburg had read it, and though he had not joined in the public chorus of attacks on Pasternak at the time of the Nobel Prize, he told us he considered it Pasternak's weakest work. He had only praise for the poetry at the end of the novel, especially 'Hamlet' and 'Winter Night', but he thought that the hero, Zhivago, was not a credible character. 'The choice of a doctor was a poor one', Ehrenburg said. 'A doctor is a humanitarian—as Chekhov was. But Zhivago experiences the revolution and the civil war without doing anything to help anybody. If he were a poet rather than a doctor, he would be credible'. Nevertheless, Ehrenburg said he had favoured the publication of *Doctor Zhivago* in the USSR; he said the reason was that 'the novel is alien to Soviet youth and will have no effect on them'.

I tried to compare Pasternak's novel with *Julio Jurenito*. Ehrenburg smiled and drew a distinction: *Julio* (which has not been published in Russia since the early 1920s when the preface was written by Bukharin) criticises the manner in which a new building is being constructed; *Zhivago* questions the very necessity of building. I asked whether *Julio* was his own favourite work, or whether he had regrets about it: 'A first love', Ehrenburg answered, 'is always something special'.

Ehrenburg said he liked what he had read to date of Louis Aragon's new, 600-page novel, *Le Semaine Sainte*, which had caused some uneasiness among the orthodox ideologists of French Communism. I asked whether he felt that Aragon was drawing some parallel, as many had suggested, between Napoleon's Hundred Days and the events in Hungary in 1956. Again Ehrenburg's answer was guarded: the writer of a historical novel, he said, always uses the past to comment on the present, and must draw from history precisely the elements which are meaningful for his own time. Asked about the Congress of Soviet Writers, scheduled for May, Ehrenburg remarked: 'I am more interested in writers when they sit at their desks'.

Ehrenburg denied that Soviet Jews were still being discriminated against, although he seemed to imply that the persecution had continued for a period after Stalin's death. 'Especially after the Twentieth Party Congress' (February 1956), he said, 'there was no such discrimination'. I remarked that I had heard that several Zionists were arrested after that Congress; he answered that he was not interested in Zionists. (Ehrenburg's *dacha* outside Moscow is, ironically, located in a village called New Jerusalem.)

After we left Ehrenburg's study, we chatted for about twenty minutes with his wife, a stout, vivacious woman, in a living room crowded with original Picassos, gifts from the artist. There were at least fifteen paintings and several ceramic plates. We asked whether the attractive scatter rug was also by Picasso. Mme Ehrenburg laughed: 'If it were I wouldn't be walking on it'.

At the Moscow airport on my last day in Russia, I was surprised to find Ilya Ehrenburg a fellow-passenger on the Air France flight to Paris. He had returned from Scandinavia, and was now going abroad for the second time in four weeks. The plane was almost empty, and I sat beside the writer during part of the flight. I translated for him a London dispatch from that day's Paris *Tribune*: it reported that Soviet novelist Mikhail Sholokhov had told the British press that Pasternak was a writer little known in Russia, and that his admirers were limited to a small circle of snobs. Ehrenburg answered quietly that it was not true. We spent the rest of our trip together talking about the Soviet poet N., whom I had met briefly in a Moscow

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

café. Ehrenburg, of course, knew him well, and was interested in hearing about our meeting.

N. is famous for his heavy drinking as well as his wit; he was already in his cups when he came over to the table where I was sitting with an American friend and a Soviet actor, an acquaintance of N.'s. It was a shock for me to meet in the flesh this unshaven, dishevelled person, whom I had known for years only through his beautiful verse. When I quoted some of his poetry to him, he said with a straight face: 'Ah, I see you know the classics'.

Later, we drove N. home in his friend's car. As he said goodnight, he remarked, 'I like to associate with good and devoted people'. I said I was glad such a thing was possible today. His answer will remain with me whenever I recall my month in Russia: 'Today, yes. But what about yesterday and tomorrow?'

Our Contributors

VERA ALEXANDROVA, literary critic and formerly director of the Chekhov Publishing House.

BARBARA BODE is a student of Soviet literature living in Germany.

HERBERT BOWMAN, who teaches Russian language and literature at the University of Oregon, is the author of *Vissarion Belinski: A Study in the Origins of Social Criticism in Russia* (1954).

EDWARD J. BROWN, author of *The Proletarian Episode in Russian Literature 1928–32*, is Professor of Russian literature at Brown University (USA).

JAROSLAV DRESLER specialises in Czech literature.

HERMAN ERMOLAEV, who is Assistant Professor of Russian at Princeton University, wrote his doctoral dissertation on *The Genesis of Socialist Realism*.

DONALD FANGER teaches Russian language and literature at Brown University (USA) and is working on a study of 'Romantic Realism: Balzac, Dickens, Dostoevsky'.

MAURICE FRIEDBERG is Assistant Professor of Russian at Hunter College, New York.

MICHAEL FUTRELL is a lecturer in the Department of Slavonic Languages at the University of Nottingham.

GEORGE GIBIAN is shortly to take up the chair of Russian Literature at Cornell University; he is author of *The Interval of Freedom: Soviet Literature 1954–57* (Minnesota, 1960).

MAX HAYWARD, joint translator of *Dr. Zhivago*, is a fellow of St. Antony's College, Oxford.

GEORGE S. N. LUCKYJ is Professor at the University of Toronto and chairman of its Department of Slavic Studies.

HUGH MCLEAN is Associate Professor in the Department of Linguistics at the University of Chicago.

TIBOR MERAY is a well-known Hungarian writer who received the Kossuth prize before the 1956 revolution. Since then he has lived in Paris, and is joint author with T. Aczel of *The Revolt of the Mind*.

G. B. MORRIS, formerly on the staff of the Central Asian Research Centre, now works at the British Museum.

WANDA BRONSKA-PAMPUCH has translated and edited the writings of the Polish philosopher Kolakowski.

ERNEST J. SIMMONS, formerly Professor of Russian Literature at Columbia University, author of *Pushkin, Tolstoy, Russian Fiction and Soviet Ideology*, etc., etc., is now engaged on a study of Chekhov.

GENE SOSIN is doing research on children's literature in the Soviet Union. He contributed the essay on 'The Children's Theatre' to *Through the Glass of Soviet Literature*, ed. E. J. Simmons (New York, 1952).

C. SZMERUK is lecturer in Yiddish Literature at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

DOSTOEVSKY TODAY

Some Recent Critical Studies

D. L. Fanger

THE complications of Dostoevsky's posthumous fate have more than matched the complications of his creative history. No modern writer, with the possible exception of Rimbaud, has provided generations of critics with such a seemingly irresistible temptation to turn his texts into pretexts. This was notoriously true in the decades following his death, both in Russia and in the West; and it still is.

It is not the purpose of this article to rehearse in detail the now familiar story of Dostoevsky's fate in Russia since the revolution,[1] or to chart current trends—beyond noting that his stock at home, which was somewhere near absolute zero ten years ago, began to rise again in 1956; nor to survey all the published evidence of that rise, for it varies greatly in quality, and contains much that is mediocre and tendentious. The present notes are intended rather to call attention to some of the more intrinsically interesting results of Soviet work on Dostoevsky during the five years since the silence on him was broken.

Silence, of course, can be a relative thing. The great period for scholarly activity on Dostoevsky was the decade and a half immediately following the revolution. These years saw the publication of what is still the fullest and best edition of his works, the appearance of the first three volumes of his letters, heavily and usefully annotated, and of a host of scholarly books and articles. Writing at the end of this period in the 1934 edition of *Literary Heritage* (*Literaturnoe Nasledstvo*, XV, p. 258), V. Komarovich could begin a review of this material with the observation that the seventeen post-revolutionary years had seen probably twice as much scholarly work on Dostoevsky as could be found over the thirty-seven years between the writer's death and the revolution. The period that followed, marked by purges and war, was hardly a propitious time for disinterested work on a writer like Dostoevsky; some books scheduled for appearance did not appear, the number of heavily slanted articles increased as the total dropped off—and still, some serious work continued to be published.

For the years 1946–53, the facts speak for themselves, as recorded in N. Matsuev's bibliography (*Khudozhestvennaya Literatura*, Moscow, 1959): only two of the major novels were published in those years, *The Adolescent*, in an edition of 28,000 copies, and *Crime and Punishment* in 10,000; 94 pages of *The Brothers Karamazov*, representing the section called 'The Boys', came out in 50,000 copies, *Poor Folk* in 250,000, *The Insulted and Injured* in 130,000, *A Friend of the Family* (*Selo Stepanchikovo*) in 20,000, and a volume of *Selected Works*, edited by the outstanding scholar B. V. Tomashevsky, in more than 110,000—the last only to elicit an article in the *Literary Gazette* in 1948 entitled 'Apologists for the Reactionary Ideas of Dostoevsky'.

In the category of critical books, four are listed for the period, none later than 1948. They are A. S. Dolinin's book on *The Adolescent*, *In Dostoevsky's Creative Laboratory* (*V Tvorcheskoi Laboratorii Dostoevskovo*, 1947), V. Kirpotin's *The Young Dostoevsky* (*Molodoi Dostoevskii*, 1947) and his 79-page *F. M. Dostoevsky* (1947)—and the eighteen-page pamphlet by V. Ermilov, *Against Reactionary Ideas in the Writings of F. M. Dostoevsky* (1948), which opened an eight-year silence in this category. The story is similar with critical articles. 1946 saw the appearance of nine articles mostly popular and short; in 1947 there were only two, by the organisation men Ermilov and Zaslavsky, respectively entitled 'F. M. Dostoevsky and Our Criticism' and 'Against the

[1] Cf., among others: Vladimir Seduro, *Dostoyevski in Russian Literary Criticism, 1846–1956* (N.Y., 1957); Temira Pachmuss, *Soviet Criticism of the Works of Fëdor Dostoyevsky* (Unpub. diss., University of Washington, 1959); John C. Fiske, 'Dostoevskij and the Soviet Critics, 1947–1948', *American Slavic and East European Review*, IX (1950), 42–56.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Idealisation of the Reactionary Views of Dostoevsky', and respectively one and two pages long. 1949 and 1950 saw but one article each: both appeared in scholarly journals and emphasised the reactionary political implications of Dostoevsky's work. A similar article was published in 1951, the only other being a minor biographical note about Dostoevsky's part in the dispute over the inheritance of the Kumanins. No articles at all are listed for 1952 or 1953.

THE ensuing silence was punctuated in 1955 and ended in 1956, when the seventy-fifth anniversary of Dostoevsky's death was made the occasion of widespread and much-publicised celebrations.[2] Speeches, articles, and books appeared; a ten-volume edition of his literary works (not including the *Diary of a Writer*) was announced and began to come out in a printing of 300,000. A volume of *Literary Heritage* was promised, to contain much new material from the notebooks and other manuscript sources, but has not yet appeared. As a Soviet reviewer of this jubilee activity notes, 'In 1956 many more articles and researches on Dostoevsky appeared among us than over the whole preceding decade'—adding somewhat defensively:

> Dostoevsky's work was never 'under a ban' in our country, as the reactionary press has slanderously claimed. The Dostoevsky Museum did not close, Dostoevsky's books, as before, were given out in libraries. But the absence of substantial new researches on Dostoevsky corresponding to the raised level and tasks of Soviet literary scholarship was in itself a serious shortcoming. . . .
>
> The Dostoevsky jubilee was not only a chronological occasion for the widening of cultural contacts between peace-loving peoples. It was for Soviet literary scholarship an urgent internal requirement, a critical need.
>
> The general results of the jubilee year may be summed up as follows: Soviet literary scholarship made a significant contribution to the cause of a genuinely scientific, historically objective study of Dostoevsky's work, and at the same time it has successfully won the battle against reaction in this area of culture. If before the jubilee the reactionary press in the West felt itself master of the situation, set the tone, and obliged the Soviet press to take a defensive position, *after* the jubilee Soviet literary scholarship became dominant, carrying on an active, aggressive struggle.[3]

The contribution heralded here consists of the following: (1) The ten-volume edition of the collected artistic *Works* (*Sobranie Sochinenii v desyati tomakh*, Moscow, 1956–58), with a generally sketchy critical apparatus, often useful, as often slanted, and markedly inferior to that of the edition of the 1920s; the last volume contains a summary, running to almost 100 pages, of Leonid Grossman's indispensable 'Biography in Dates and Documents' first published in 1935. (2) The fourth and concluding volume of the *Letters* (1878–81), under the editorship of A. S. Dolinin (the first volume had appeared in 1928, the second in 1930, the third in 1934—and this last, containing an index to the whole set, just a quarter of a century later in 1959). (3) The *Description of the Manuscripts of F. M. Dostoevsky* (*Opisanie Rukopisei F. M. Dostoevskovo*), a very substantial production that came out in 1957, and a legitimate cause for pride. (4) *The Creative Works of Dostoevsky* (*Tvorchestvo Dostoevskovo*), published in 1959 by the Academy of Sciences and containing the more serious scholarly articles elicited by the jubilee celebrations, as well as a useful and revealing review of jubilee and post-jubilee literature by Ya. M. Strochkov, entitled 'Current Soviet Literary Criticism on Dostoevsky'. (5) *Pro and Contra* (*Za i Protiv*), subtitled 'Notes on Dostoevsky', by the former *enfant terrible* of the Formalist movement, Viktor Shklovsky. (6) V. Ya. Kirpotin's *F. M. Dostoevsky: Creative Path* [*Tvorcheskii Put*], *1821–59*, a bulky ideological-literary biography of the writer through the period of his imprisonment and exile, more notable for the consistency of its respect for Dostoevsky than for any light it throws on him. (7) V. Ermilov's *F. M. Dostoevsky*; its nature is indicated by the fact that it seems to have been the only sizeable piece of jubilee literature selected for translation into

[2] See Seduro, pp. 295–305; and Ya. M. Strochkov, 'Sovremennoe sovetskoe literaturovedenie o Dostoevskom', in Akademiia Nauk SSSR, *Tvorchestvo Dostoevskovo* (Moscow, 1959), pp. 510–44.

[3] Strochkov, loc. cit., pp. 510–11.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

English by the Foreign Languages Publishing House. This book represents the new, relatively more tolerant party line, as the same author's work in the late forties represented the vituperative one; but it is unlikely to be consulted for insight into the problems of Dostoevsky's art. (8) S. Borshchevsky's *Shchedrin and Dostoevsky*, a schematic outline of the ideological antagonism between the two writers, noteworthy perhaps chiefly for some quotations from previously unpublished Dostoevsky manuscripts.

In the pages that follow, relatively detailed attention will be confined to those recent contributions which are likely to be of most interest to genuine students of Dostoevsky.

AMONG primary sources, the fourth volume of the *Letters* and the *Description of Manuscripts* are both solid works of permanent value; but whereas the first completes a long outstanding project (and, with its lengthy index, makes easy reference to the earlier volumes possible for the first time), the latter is a new job of monumental proportions, since the accidents of time which harass all bibliographers were often complicated by the extraordinary biography of the writer himself.

As V. S. Nechaeva points out in her excellent introductory article, 'The Manuscript Heritage of F. M. Dostoevsky': 'The conditions of his life from the 1840s through the 1860s were extremely inauspicious for the preservation of his archive, and only in the last decade did a comparatively normal and secure routine, together with the character and interests of the writer's wife A. G. Dostoevskaya, exercise a positive influence on the preservation of his manuscripts' (p. 3). As a result, no single work of Dostoevsky's is represented by full manuscripts of all the parts, or by manuscripts reflecting all the stages of its development. Thus the enormous literary and epistolary activity of the late forties (or such of it as must have survived his very frequent changes of residence in those years) vanished, on his arrest in 1849, into the files of the Third Section of the Imperial Chancellery, never to be found. By the same token, all manuscripts from the period of exile have disappeared, although the letters were in large measure saved. His second wife, who devoted herself both before and after his death to the preservation and cataloguing of his papers, was able to save a large number of them from the early and middle 1860s by entrusting them to relatives when she and the writer went abroad in 1867; but the manuscripts of *The Idiot* and *The Eternal Husband*, as well as original variants of a section of *The Devils* (*The Possessed*) were burned, on Dostoevsky's insistence, in 1871, when they were preparing to return to Russia, out of fear that a search at the frontier might, when it discovered them, hold up the couple's return to the capital (Anna Grigoryevna was due shortly to give birth). Only a few notebooks were saved, brought in separately by Dostoevsky's mother-in-law. Even in the last decade, from which we have most of the manuscripts, those for *The Brothers Karamazov* are in large measure missing, their fate unknown.

Furthermore, the considerable quantity of manuscripts which have survived are scattered throughout a number of cities and institutions in the Soviet Union, often for the most accidental of reasons; and it is thus no small service that the *Description* performs in indicating their present location. However, finding a given manuscript is not the last of the difficulties, and the publication of the notebooks in *Literary Heritage*, promised in 1956 and still awaited, is complicated by such considerations as these:

> The notes on different themes of a single notebook are . . . mixed up in it in the most fantastic way. Dostoevsky practically never filled up a notebook in consecutive order, from the first page to the last. The dates frequently found in his notebooks show that he would write now at the beginning of the notebook, now in the middle, return again to the beginning, make separate notes at the end, and so forth. Not only that, but he would turn the notebook around, making the last pages the first, and would continue in that order to fill a notebook already partially filled in the original direction. Add to that Dostoevsky's habit of variegating the pages with jottings in all possible directions and in lines of the most varied length; of making numerous interpolations and corrections, using conventional signs, in the tiniest handwriting, often referring these interpolations

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and corrections to pages which were far from the basic text; of putting among his notes drawings, calligraphic exercises, and various so-called 'pen tryouts'—then those complexities which arise for investigators of Dostoevsky's notebooks, and which arose in full measure for the compilers of the description of his manuscripts, become understandable. In the notebooks and memorandum books is included the larger part of his creative writings, and also of his minor everyday jottings, which are very valuable for the biographer (p. 13).

In view of these difficulties, the *Description of Manuscripts* has rendered a signal service by indexing the notebooks according to theme, so that, say, a researcher working on *Crime and Punishment* may now find, under that single heading, references to all the scattered notes relating to that novel.

At the same time, the compilers of this description note that comparisons of manuscripts with those portions of Dostoevsky's notebooks already published in Russian (chiefly in the 1920s and 1930s) show the published versions to contain 'numerous inaccuracies, sometimes even distortions of the text' (p. 18). Their forthcoming publication is once more announced. Besides this, new and unpublished manuscripts relating to *The Devils*, *Crime and Punishment*, and *The Eternal Husband* are reported, along with a store of materials on *The Adolescent* surpassing in volume the materials on all the other novels combined, and a quantity of material relating to the *Diary of a Writer* (pp. 18–19). This reference work also contains a valuable and systematic list of Dostoevsky's notes for unrealised projects, only some of which have been partially published in periodicals: here, as with other categories, references are given to all published versions existing in Russian—in itself no small bibliographical aid. Finally, a still untapped resource is pointed out in the large store of letters addressed to Dostoevsky from correspondents of the most various kind. In short, even to those students of Dostoevsky who may never work in his archives, this 600-page book may be of great value, and one may hope that its use by Soviet scholars will in the future yield products of equally substantial scholarship.

AMONG the critical works, the most important is *The Creative Works of Dostoevsky* (*Tvorchestvo Dostoevskovo*), a well printed volume of over 500 large pages, the contents of which are as follows (the length of each article is given in parentheses): V. V. Ermilov, 'Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoevsky' (10 pp.); T. L. Motyleva, 'Dostoevsky in World Literature' (30 pp.); A. A. Belkin, 'On Dostoevsky's Realism' (10 pp.); G. L. Abramovich, 'On the Question of the Nature and Character of Dostoevsky's Realism' (10 pp.); B. A. Byalik, 'Dostoevsky and Dostoevskyism [*dostoevshchina*] in Gorky's Appraisals' (36 pp.); V. Ya. Kirpotin, '*Notes from a Dead House*' (27 pp.); F. I. Evnin, 'The Novel *Crime and Punishment*' (45 pp.); G. M. Friedlander, 'The Novel *The Idiot*' (42 pp.); F. I. Evnin, 'The Novel *The Devils*' (50 pp.); A. A. Belkin, '*The Brothers Karamazov* (Social-Philosophical Problematics)' (28 pp.); U. A. Guralnik, 'F. M. Dostoevsky in the Literary-Esthetic Struggle of the Sixties' (37 pp.); L. P. Grossman, 'Dostoevsky the Artist' (87 pp.); A. V. Chicherin, 'The Poetical Organisation (*Stroi*) of Language in the Novels of Dostoevsky' (37 pp.); D. O. Zaslavsky, 'Notes on Humour and Satire in the Works of Dostoevsky' (37 pp.); V. S. Nechaeva, 'Dostoevsky's Illustrators' (38 pp.); and Ya. M. Strochkov, 'Current Soviet Literary Criticism on Dostoevsky' (35 pp.).

It will be seen from this table of contents that there is a refreshing concentration on the major work, with the notable exception of *Notes from Underground* (Chicherin's article is chiefly, though not exclusively, about *The Adolescent*), and a playing-down, by and large, of tendentious irrelevancies in choice of topic. There is no index or bibliography to the volume (does the 'fear of bibliography' mentioned by one Soviet scholar still persist? [4]), but

[4] Cf. P. N. Berkov: 'The long period of "fear of bibliography" (*bibliografioboyazn*) which noticeably hindered the development of Soviet science as a whole and literary scholarship in particular has, so far as one can tell, ended. . . . In the light of the decisions of the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU and the resolution of the Central Committee "On Overcoming the Cult of Personality and its Consequences", it has become clear that the neglect of bibliography observable at the end of the 40s and the beginning of the 50s in Soviet literary scholarship represented a disinctive consequence of the cult of personality' (*Izvestiya*

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

footnotes are plentiful and there seems to have been no reluctance to cite earlier Soviet (and occasionally pre-Soviet) work on Dostoevsky; some of the articles, moreover, are quite free from ritual obeisances to Lenin and Marx. One does not, of course, look for religious interpretations here—although Dostoevsky's own religious views are mentioned by some of the writers with fairness—nor does one find any real confrontation of Dostoevsky's themes with Soviet reality. On the other hand, one can find in significant measure not only purely literary discussion, but the kind of work which Soviet scholarship should be in the best position to provide: the serious relating of Dostoevsky's work to the social background of its time. We still lack in English, as in Russian, the sort of job that Humphrey House did for Dickens in *The Dickens World*; for there is, in House's terms, a Dostoevsky world as well, of no less literary import, if less familiar.

If few of the articles are outstanding, few are without some interest; thus, even the two discussions of Dostoevsky's realism, too brief and schematic to develop any convincing argument, manage at least to raise some points deserving of more thorough treatment. One such is the observation made in passing by A. A. Belkin: 'Dostoevsky is the creator of his own kind of philosophical and psychological grotesque, as possible within the framework of realism as is satirical grotesque, but at the same time containing, in Dostoevsky, fantastic elements as well' (p. 52). Similarly valid, and even more casual is G. L. Abramovich's remark about the unusual complexity of Dostoevsky's relation to romanticism (p. 60).

The consecutive argument and specific concentration on Dostoevsky's works which such articles lack are, however, to be found in the two contributions by F. I. Evnin, and most notably his monograph on *Crime and Punishment* (Evnin and Grossman together account for one third of the bulk of this volume, and their articles alone are worth the price of it). It is impossible in a short space to do justice to the closeness of Evnin's argument or to the thoroughness of scholarship which makes his article on *Crime and Punishment* so noteworthy; but some indication of his range and insight may be attempted. If he concentrates particularly on the social aspects of the novel, he does so for the most part with a fine literary tact. *Crime and Punishment*, he finds, 'is the first of Dostoevsky's large-scale creations in which, besides the writer's new views, his new poetics found reflection, tied to his aspiration towards a maximal "ideologisation" of the novel. By its artistic execution, *Crime and Punishment* is distinguished from all Dostoevsky's previous novels, and, on the other hand, in many ways anticipates all the subsequent ones: this is the first of his social-philosophic novels' (p. 130). Nor, in making this judgment, does he omit to mention *Notes from Underground;* rather, he acknowledges its plausibility as a turning point, but opts in favour of the later novel for purely literary reasons.

Observing that this is 'the first novel of Russian classical literature in which the climactic moments of the action are played out in dirty taverns, on the street, in the squalid back rooms of the poor' (p. 139), he gives point to the observation with a lengthy review of the literature of the 1860s immediately preceding *Crime and Punishment*, some of which was published in Dostoevsky's own magazines—the whole wave of sketches, *feuilletons*, stories, novellas and novels which, like the 'physiologies' of the 1840s, was dedicated to portraying the conditions of life in the great cities. Evnin recognises that in *Crime and Punishment* Dostoevsky's analogous descriptions are relegated to the background, but convincingly argues their relevance—as he does of the then popular themes of the poor student and the prostitute—the better to mark Dostoevsky's originality. In addition, his pages on the impact in Russia of Louis Napoleon's *Histoire de Jules César*, and his demonstration of its reflection in Dostoevsky's novel by the citation of parallel passages from the book and from an 1885 article in *The Contemporary* (*Sovremennik*), afford a striking example of Dostoevsky's use of topical material.

ON the technical side Evnin offers a great many insights into the structure of the novel, its thematics, manipulation of time,

Akademii Nauk SSSR, Otdelenie Literatury i Yazyka, 1956, XV, vyp. 6, 538).

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

'lighting', dialogue, and style. A concluding generalisation may be quoted as representative:

> In Dostoevsky's novels the narration, as a rule, concerns not the changes of the hero but his incessant, ever more intense buffetings between the same polar extremities which he combines within himself—which arise from his 'idea-feeling' [*ideia-chuvstvo*].
>
> The reincarnation, the transformation of the hero as a result of his collision with life, is the most characteristic and constant theme of the nineteenth-century novel—both of the Russian and the West-European. In Dostoevsky's own novels, constructed in this respect according to the laws of the drama, we have to do for the most part only with the incessant accumulation of the interior and exterior collisions of the hero, culminating in a tragic denouement. It is true that sometimes it culminates in his 'enlightenment' (Raskolnikov's 'resurrection', Versilov's 'renewal'). But this enlightenment, almost always carried out in the epilogue, is essentially a not very convincing pendant to the hero's story. Pierre Bezukhov and Alexander Aduev, Bolkonsky and Lavretsky—like Wilhelm Meister, Emma Bovary, Rastignac—'change soul' in the course of the novel, and sometimes more than once (of course without overstepping the bounds of that single complex of internal features which is embodied in them). This cannot be said of the majority of Dostoevsky's central characters: with their first appearance on the scene they already carry within themselves that basic collision, the discovery and deepening of which is their whole subsequent story. They stand, in this respect, alongside such heroes of tragedy as Boris Godunov, Macbeth, Hamlet. Their movement in the novel is not rectilinear, but in a spiral (pp. 169–70).

Most of the same qualities are observable in Evnin's long article on *The Devils*. Background here consists of sizeable quotations from the records of the incredible Nechaev affair, which provided Dostoevsky with the ideological stimulus and many actual models for the people and events of his novel. Dostoevsky is accused of distortion in his use of these models, but the historical evidence adduced serves in part to qualify the accusation, and it is further balanced by the observation that none of the other social groups represented in the book comes out looking very much better. The ideological analysis points, in Evnin's summing up, 'to the ideological isolation of the writer, who held off from the "crows" yet did not join the "peacocks"; to the fact that, even while raging against the ideas of revolution and socialism, Dostoevsky did not turn into a blind apologist of the existing social-political system; most of all, to the complete utopianism of those hopes and dreams which gave rise to the bitterness of *The Devils*' (p. 243). To this temperate evaluation are joined discriminating praise for the artistic merits of the work and the ingenuity of its construction (though the unity of *Crime and Punishment* is found lacking here), and a number of interesting remarks on such things as the role of the narrator and the technique of characterisation by idiosyncrasies of speech. Berdyaev is even cited at one point, and without the customary epithets.

THOUGH space does not permit a full review of the other contributions to this volume, special mention must be made of Leonid Grossman's monograph—the longest single piece in the book—'Dostoevsky the Artist'. For both the length and quality of his service, Grossman must surely be considered the dean of living Dostoevsky scholars. Seventy-one years old when this essay appeared, he could look back to published articles on Dostoevsky as early as 1914. The most recent work must be regarded, then, as a sort of *summa*. Less a piece of research than a collection of the fruits of research and, at the same time, an indication of possibilities for further exploration, his article is divided into six chapters: (1) Dostoevsky's Genre; (2) Laws of Composition; (3) Creative Method; (4) The Changing of Styles; (5) The Novel and the Novella; (6) Leitmotifs. The very nature of this article makes it difficult to summarise and summary could, in any case, not do it justice. The opening of his section on leitmotifs, however—even without the demonstration that follows—may stand as characteristic:

> Recurrent images and repeated situations—these form the basis of his narrative art. Characters with related qualities and similar fates pass through his portrait gallery, lending his work a striking unity. Balzac would

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

lead one character—Rastignac or Vautrin—through the whole series of novels that went into the *Human Comedy*. Dostoevsky developed a single character in a host of figures over the whole cycle of his works, without ceasing to vary, to strengthen, and to enrich his basic theme-image [*tema-obraz*]. What interests him is not the separate expressive figure, but the problem incarnate, the drama-incarnate [*chelovek-problema, chelovek-drama*]. The solution of such a problem knows no end, and the action of such a conflict envisages no finale. It is always continuing and lives without ceasing to evoke endless new variants in the creative experiments of the great artist. Let us arrange these pivotal images of the novelist according to the chief headings of his image system.

Dostoevsky's leading types are many and various. They are the thinkers and dreamers, the abused girls [*porugannye devushki*], the sensualists, the voluntary buffoons, the doubles, the underground men, the Russian broad nature ('the impetuous ones'), the pure in heart, the righteous ('the most wise teachers of life'), the outcasts, the shady dealers, the virtuosi of investigation and the court, the nihilists and pseudo-nihilists, the proud and meek women, the impressionable children and meditative adolescents (p. 399).

After developing each of these categories, Grossman concludes by placing Dostoevsky within the international literary movements of his time. In style, Grossman observes, he is 'closest to that large genre of the late romantic novel on a realistic base created by Victor Hugo, Georges Sand, the young Balzac, and, in part, Eugène Sue' (p. 414)—a point he has been elaborating for almost half a century.

Shklovsky's book, *Pro and Contra*, is cast in the writer's favourite form: this is a book of notes, loosely organised, full of digressions, covering *Poor Folk, The Double, Notes from a Dead House, Notes from Underground*, and *The Brothers Karamazov*. The tone is conversational, the topics various, the conjectures sometimes wild, sometimes irritating in their underdevelopment, sometimes extraordinarily suggestive and illuminating. Formalism does not predominate—for his method changes with the topics considered—but it is invoked, in fact if not in name, and happily applied. Of particular interest are his remarks on the role of St. Petersburg in Dostoevsky's novels, and his excellent analysis of *Notes from a Dead House*, in the chapter entitled 'A New Artistic Unity'. For all its vagaries and occasional inaccuracies, this book is the product of a lively and highly individual sensibility, and even those portions which fail to convince critically can stand as superior conversation pieces.

A FEW general observations may replace a conclusion. Soviet work on Dostoevsky over the past five years has shown that it is once again possible to publish serious work on him. The limitations on the permissible approaches have not been stressed in these remarks; they obviously exist, though no longer so strictly as to vitiate what they control. A philosophically sympathetic interpretation, for example, seems hardly likely to appear—and though Dostoevsky's own religious convictions have been cited with fairness on occasion, they have not been cited at any length. Similarly, an honest and searching examination of Dostoevsky's relevance to the more tragic experiences of the Soviet peoples is nowhere hinted in published literature. In terms of scholarship, despite the widened range of quotable authors, it is still vain to look for any mention of such important emigré writers as A. L. Bem and others of the Prague circle, of Mochulsky, and many more. On the other hand, one can only greet hopefully the implications, borne out by the best of the recent Soviet writing on Dostoevsky, of Shklovsky's statement: 'We are not only Dostoevsky's judges, we are his posterity and the inheritors of his genius' (p. 148). For if we are all the inheritors of his genius by now, his countrymen still have, by that very fact alone, a particular contribution to make towards the understanding of his works. They made it notably in the past, particularly in the 1920s, and should the best of their recent work be followed up, a fruitful dialogue on one of the world's great writers may once more be possible.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Sholokhov Thirty Years After

VIRGIN SOIL UPTURNED, II

Herman Ermolaev

LAST year the second and concluding part of Mikhail Sholokhov's *Virgin Soil Upturned* * was published in Moscow, a novel whose complex yet highly revealing history goes back as far as 1930.

Sholokhov was still working on *Quiet flows the Don* when the collectivisation of agriculture got under way. This movement, coupled with Sholokhov's first meeting with Stalin in January 1930, during which they discussed collectivisation, made him direct his attention to the contemporary scene. 'The conversation', he recalled, 'was very profitable for me and encouraged me to put into practice new creative ideas'.[1] The novel was written hot on the scent of events with great speed and spontaneity.

By the end of 1931 the book was sent for publication to the literary monthly *Novy Mir*. Its original title, *With Blood and Sweat* (*S krovyu i potom*), symbolised the heavy toll paid by those whose property and labour were socialised, and the arduous efforts of those who carried out the collectivisation. The editors of *Novy Mir* protested against the title and asked Sholokhov to delete a number of passages, especially those describing the dispossession of kulaks' households. After consulting members of the Party District Committee in Vyoshenskaya, where he lived, Sholokhov changed the title to *Virgin Soil Upturned*, implying the social and political upheaval that changed the life and history of the Russian peasantry. But he refused to make textual deletions and appealed to the Party Central Committee. The matter was quickly decided by Stalin's personal intervention in Sholokhov's behalf. The novel was serialised in *Novy Mir* in 1932.

Taken as a whole, it gave the proper political interpretation of events. Its political high point is the weaving of Stalin's article 'Dizzy with Success' into the fabric of the story. The article condemns the excesses committed during collectivisation and appears to leave the peasant a choice between private and collective farming. The truth is glimpsed when a communist idealist in the novel reveals the compulsory nature of collectivisation, but the theme is not further developed.

Soviet critics acclaimed the book as a historical novel based on contemporary material and an epic of collectivisation. They exaggerated. The action takes place between January and May 1930, whereas many of the most momentous events of collectivisation occurred later, between 1932 and 1934, after Sholokhov had completed the first book. Nevertheless it had a definite historical value, and the qualities to make it part of the epic of collectivisation, though it needed one or several sequels of corresponding calibre. The dynamic events in the first book follow each other in rapid succession, at times generating great tension and suspense. Relief is provided primarily by the comic element, which is considerably stronger here than in *Quiet flows the Don*. The opposing sides in the political struggle are the communists of the village of Gremyachi Log, the novel's setting, and some former White Army officers who are plotting a rebellion. The conflict is still not resolved at the end; a continued struggle in the future is indicated.

THE completion of the second book of *Virgin Soil Upturned* proved to be a difficult task requiring almost thirty years. The reasons for this delay are multiple and most of them are connected with circumstances beyond Sholokhov's control and not with his own artistic demands upon himself. Sholokhov spoke several times in the 1930s of completing his

---

* It has now appeared in translation in the United States as *Harvest on the Don*. The first part, entitled *Virgin Soil Upturned* in the English edition, was called *Seed of Tomorrow* in the American.

[1] Quoted by I. Lezhner, *Neva*, 1955, 2, p. 158.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

novel within a few months.[2] To understand the history and subject matter of the second book of *Virgin Soil Upturned*, it must be remembered that in 1932 the very existence of the collective farms was threatened by the mass refusal of the peasants to work and take care of the collective property. The government retaliated with terror and the confiscation of grain. This resulted in a devastating famine in Southern Russia, especially during the winter of 1932–33. As usual, the government looked for scapegoats and a wave of arrests and expulsions of the local communists swept over the party. These events, particularly the last, caused in Sholokhov a severe emotional depression.

He gave up writing. He felt that the Vyoshenskaya district was headed for a catastrophe, whose dimensions, he confessed, even he as a writer could not imagine.[3] His plans reflected the impact of these experiences in two ways. First, he decided not to include the occurrences of 1932–33 in the second book of *Virgin Soil Upturned*. Second, he entertained the idea of writing a play and a separate novel about this period.[4] Either he intended to reserve the politically tense period of 1932–33 for his new novel, which could be indefinitely postponed, or he felt that he could not risk incorporating it into the second book of *Virgin Soil Upturned*. He realised that the relatively uneventful year of 1931 would not provide sufficient opportunity for his characters to express themselves fully, and spoke of the advantages that could be gained by placing them in the year 1932, foreseeing that without this the second book would not be as interesting as the first.[5] But none of his plans came to fruition; none of his works about collectivisation which may have been completed or in progress appeared in the 1930s. During World War II all of Sholokhov's manuscripts were lost.

In the years following the war it appears that he devoted his efforts primarily to his new unfinished novel *They Fought for Their Country*. This, plus the fact that these were the last years of Stalin's rule, would account for his failure to publish the sequel to *Virgin Soil Upturned*. At that time official optimism and the false idealisation of Soviet life in fiction reached their peak; and the appearance of an outspoken work on forcible collectivisation was impossible. In point of fact, Sholokhov had to make certain revisions in the first book of the novel in order to meet the ideological requirements of the time.[6]

The writing of the second book was apparently resumed in 1953 or 1954. In 1954 several chapters appeared in the periodical *Ogonyok*. Two instalments of the novel were also published in *Oktyabr* in 1955. During the same year *Pravda* began a serialisation of the novel which ended in February 1960. The earliest complete version was published in the Leningrad monthly *Neva* for July 1959 and January 1960. This version may be called definitive since the subsequent periodical and book editions seem to be identical with it.

The time it took to complete the second book was bound to arouse curiosity. One explanation

[2] See 'V rabote "Tikhy Don" i "Podnyataya tselina",' *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, 6 February 1934; V. Ketlinskaya, 'Mikhail Sholokhov', *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, 17 August 1934; Dir, 'Razgovor s Sholokhovym', *Izvestiya*, 10 March 1935; 'Poslednyaya kniga "Podnyatoy tseliny",' *Pravda*, 1 January 1939. The fourth and last book of *Quiet flows the Don* illustrates the real difficulties. Sholokhov had finished the novel by the end of 1937. (I. Eksler 'V gostyakh u Sholokhova', *Izvestiya*, 31 December 1937), but Stalin's demand that the novel's hero become a Red Cossack delayed its publication for more than two years. (This information was given by a member of the Propaganda Section of the Party Committee of Rostov Province, and a lecturer in Marxism-Leninism, in conversation with a faculty member of the University of Rostov.) During that time Sholokhov apparently succeeded in defending his interpretation, though the published ending of the novel may not be the one originally intended. Since he planned to finish *Quiet flows the Don* first, the completion of *Virgin Soil Upturned* was also affected.

[3] See F. Abramov and V. Gura, *M. A. Sholokhov* (Leningrad, 1958), p. 146.

[4] See 'Pyesa o kolkhoze: Mikhail Sholokhov o svoikh blizhayshikh tvorcheskikh planakh', *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, 29 June 1934, and Dir, loc. cit. It may be noted, however, that in his earliest plans Sholokhov intended to bring the second book of *Virgin Soil Upturned* down to the middle of 1932 (A. Kut, 'Vtoraya chast "Podnyatoy tseliny",' *Vechernyaya Moskva*, 1 March 1933).

[5] See Dir, loc cit.

[6] For several examples, see I. Lezhnev, 'Za chistotu yazyka', *Zvezda*, 1953, 6, pp. 156–70. The original text of the first book, except for certain minor stylistic changes, was restored in 1957 with one important difference in the passage about Stalin in chapter thirteen, where some fifteen lines describing Stalin as infallible, mentioning his fighting at the front, and expressing an absolute obedience to him while 'mercilessly wetting our hands in our own blood and others', have been deleted.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of the delay merits comment here. It was reported in *The New York Times* that, according to rumours in Moscow literary circles, the publication of the second book was deferred for two years because several high party officials objected to the ending—the arrest during the purges of the 30s of its hero, Davydov, on false charges, and his subsequent suicide in prison.[7] Such an ending seems unlikely, because if Davydov was to be arrested, it would have been during the second half of 1932, when the arrest would have been quite typical. Two-thirds of the second book was serialised in *Pravda* in 1958, and there was no indication that Sholokhov was going to extend the novel's action beyond 1930 unless he planned a sudden chronological jump, hardly in keeping with the part already published or with his own statements about the chronological limitations of the second book. Of course, Sholokhov in the late 1950s might have thought of Davydov's suicide as an alternative dénouement, but in order to introduce it he would have had practically to rewrite the entire version of the second book of *Virgin Soil Upturned* as serialised since 1954 and as it is now known in its entirety.

THE second book does not turn out to be a sequel to the first in its character as an epic of collectivisation. The time of its action—the first two summer months of 1930—is too short for any sequence of momentous events. Thus Sholokhov abandoned not only his original plan to carry the story into 1932, but even stopped short of 1931. The village of Gremyachi Log appears in the second book as if cut off from the rest of the Soviet Union. Neither the echo of continuing agrarian upheaval, nor the decisions of the Sixteenth Party Congress (June–July 1930) concerning collectivisation, nor even Stalin's speech at the Congress reach the village. The precise chronological dating which enhances the historicity of the first book is absent from the second.

The sequel is composed of three basic elements. The first is a description of the work and personal life of the three main protagonists. They are the same as in the first book: the chairman of the collective farm, Semyon Davydov, a former sailor and one of the twenty-five thousand industrial workers sent by the Party in 1929 to help organise collective farms; the chairman of the village Soviet, Andrey Razmyotnov, a local communist, a plain, moderate man with a touch of gentleness and humour; and the secretary of the local party cell, Makar Nagulnov, a colourful figure, a self-made fanatic and idealist, an unrestrained and solemn extremist obsessed with world revolution. The second major component is the portrayal of the enemies of the Soviet regime. They are represented, as in the first book, mainly by the Cossack officer Polovtsev and by the White Army Lieutenant Lyatevsky. Secretly, they live in the house of Yakov Lukich Ostrovnov, a saboteur disguised as a collective farm manager. The third component is made up of a variety of inserted stories, chiefly the comic stories and mishaps of the old man Shchukar, a popular story-teller type, a born braggart, and an unlucky wretch. Quantitatively speaking, Shchukar alone is allotted more space than the anti-Soviet forces and the entire struggle with them.

The mass of static material gathered into a short period of time further diminishes the importance of any strict sequence in events which already suffer from a lack of historicity. The second book, as a whole, is loosely composed, and indeed Sholokhov rearranged the chapters from one edition to another. Thus the first five chapters have a different order in *Ogonyok* for 1954, in *Oktyabr* for 1955, and in the final version. The order of the chapters published in *Pravda* in 1959 also differs substantially from their final arrangement. The present eighth chapter first appeared in *Pravda* 22 and 23 February 1959, between the instalments which formed chapters twenty-one and seventeen, respectively, in the final version. This chapter was apparently a much later tribute to the present-day idea of a party secretary and was easily absorbed into the amorphous body of the novel.

Another characteristic of the second book is the lack of deep thought. Sholokhov has never been a strong or original thinker; yet in *Quiet flows the Don*, in particular, one feels the underlying idea of man's unity with nature. The

[7] See articles by Harrison E. Salisbury in the issue for 1 September 1959, and 18 February 1960. Sholokhov denied this assertion.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

characters are children of nature, which is forever with them in all its vigour even when they themselves are no longer among the living. Nature to Sholokhov was not only biological but also historic, an integral part of the unique and glorious history of the Don Cossacks. His love for this nature would from time to time break through the layer of his Marxist convictions. 'Low I bow and filially kiss your fresh earth, O you, Don Steppe, soaked with unrusting Cossack blood!' he exclaims in one of his lyrical digressions in the third book of *Quiet flows the Don.*

In the second book of *Virgin Soil Upturned* the natural setting is the same but its treatment is different. Nature appears less frequently and the few lengthy descriptions of it are either used to illustrate the triumph of the new social order or are associated with Davydov's personal experiences. The book opens with a scene presenting the land as a breast-feeding mother and promising a rich harvest. This land, however, belongs to the collective farm and symbolises its triumph and bounty. The glittering cornfield covered with dew is contrasted with Yakov Lukich, the enemy and saboteur, who looks like 'a tired old horse' and curses the Soviet regime in his powerless anger. Elsewhere Davydov likens a ploughed field to a large piece of black velvet and imagines it in October when it will be covered with winter wheat, the fruit of the collective farmers' hard toil.

Together with the historic nature of the Cossack region, folklore too has almost disappeared, with the exception of the folk-narrative genre reflected in stories and anecdotes. Cossack songs, not only of the epic but even of the lyrical kind, are absent.

The ethnic, regional element in the second book is decidedly subordinate to the political and ideological. It is unquestionably the most orthodox of Sholokhov's completed works. He portrays events and characters in accordance with the present party line, thus realising in practice one of the cardinal tenets of socialist-realism, its *partiinost*. Life is shown in its historically-determined movement towards socialism. The goals of the party are identical with those of the masses. At this point *partiinost* merges with *narodnost*, another pillar of socialist-realism, which requires portrayal of the most vital aspirations of the people. The communists in the second book of *Virgin Soil Upturned* identify themselves with the interests of the people and enjoy, in return, their confidence.

THE trends of the de-Stalinisation period are reflected in the attempt to allay the atmosphere of suspicion and fear created under Stalin's rule, and in the advocacy of a softer and more personal approach to the people. The new attitude is particularly transparent in the handling of religious issues. The only means Davydov applies to persuade women to return to work on Sunday are his kindest words and most gallant manners. Needless to say, this episode is utterly untypical of the early 1930s and demonstrates, perhaps not without exaggeration, the new and more lenient treatment of religious problems. There are, however, many occasions when Sholokhov tries to discredit religion.

The party itself appears as united and disciplined. Among its members there are no disagreements with the policy of its leaders, as was the case in the first book, where Nagulnov questioned the correctness of Stalin's article 'Dizzy with Success'. The communist deviationists described in the first book are no longer in the Party. The only bad communist in the second book is the chairman of a collective farm, who has fallen victim to his proprietary instincts. But this loss is more than compensated by the introduction, in the new Chapter Eight, of a new party secretary, Ivan Nesterenko, an exemplary leader for a rural district. He is an able party organiser and an accomplished agricultural expert. The sphere of his activities is broad, ranging from leadership of local party organisations down to concern for the verses displayed on posters in the collective-farm reading-room. Nesterenko is demanding, but just, open, friendly, warm. When he speaks to Davydov, the latter feels that 'for a long time none of his party superiors has talked to him with such friendliness, simplicity, and human kindness'.[8]

Artistically, however, the party secretary does not cut a convincing figure. Sholokhov's

[8] *Podnyataya tselina*, Books I and II, Moscow, 1960, p. 427.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

efforts to breathe life into him, to individualise him, seem futile. Even if Nesterenko wears a sumptuous Kuban Cossack cap, challenges Davydov to a friendly wrestling match, suffers from malaria, has a creditable civil-war record and brown eyes, he still remains essentially the sum total of the virtues expected in theory from today's party secretary.

In sharp contrast with the virtuous characters stand the enemies of the Soviet regime. The political aims of the officers Polovtsev and Lyatevsky are shown as anti-national and selfish, and these determine their personal qualities; Sholokhov portrays them in a state of progressive moral degradation. The officers are perpetually quarrelling and insulting each other. Their occasional display of human emotions serves only to emphasise their basic inhumanity. When captured they readily betray their fellow-conspirators. In this Sholokhov seems to have lost almost completely the relative objectivity he showed in *Quiet flows the Don*. The moral degradation of Yakov Lukich is equally striking. He locks up his mother and lets her starve to death, because in talking she might betray the officers' hiding-place.

In the final version the chapters about the officers are placed at the very beginning and near the end. This arrangement serves to accentuate the contrast between the opposing forces and to concentrate action and suspense closer to the climax—the killing of Davydov and Nagulnov by Lyatevsky when they try to arrest him. But Sholokhov seems to have tried to avoid a progressive building up of tension. The chapter preceding the climax of the novel describes the slow pace of life in Gremyachi Log and its everyday occurrences. Perhaps its purpose was to emphasise the stability of the new social order, in contrast to the futile and feeble attempt to destroy it. The last chapter opens with passages of remarkable brevity and expressiveness. Nothing in it seems superfluous, and yet there are many details accompanying the narration of how Davydov, Nagulnov, and Razmyotnov go to arrest the suspects. The weather, the mooing of a calf, the crowing of a rooster, the handling of weapons, the smell in Yakov Lukich's hut—all these details are skilfully incorporated into the narrative and create the illusion of real life. Particularly effective is the climactic scene. Davydov, losing consciousness, falls backwards clasping tightly in his left hand a chip of wood cut from the lintel by the bullet—a detail not easy to forget.

THE realm of personal emotions is portrayed in the love experiences of Davydov, Nagulnov, and Razmyotnov. Davydov is shown in relation to two women: the vain and dissolute Lushka, divorced wife of Nagulnov, and the seventeen-year-old Varya, who drives the oxen and embodies the purity and freshness of first love. The two love stories make an impression of stiffness and abruptness. Though Davydov's relationship with Lushka is described with humour and her portrait is vivid, the effect is spoiled by the desire to show how Davydov's association with an unworthy woman made him neglect his duties as chairman of the collective farm. Their actual relations are relegated to the background and overshadowed by the judgment passed on them by the collective farmers and the party secretary. If Davydov was to remain the hero, his relationship with Lushka had to be cut short and without delay. And Sholokhov did exactly that.

In the story of Davydov and Varya the devoted love of a selfless and innocent girl appears as a reward for Davydov, a compensation for what Lushka could not give him. The beginning of the relationship is successfully portrayed in a gently humorous contrast between the calm, unconcerned Davydov and the loving girl who is longing for affection. But when Davydov responds to her love and decides to marry her, the relationship becomes unconvincing and artificial. Davydov's response is more rationalistic than emotional; he remains restrained and aloof. This aloofness might be partly attributed to Sholokhov's desire to bring out the chivalry and faithfulness of the working class in love, but it comes out stiff with moralism. Sholokhov has been powerful and convincing in depicting love as he saw it; here its broad stream is directed into the narrow channels of politics and morality.

Makar Nagulnov's love for Lushka is deep (which was mentioned in the first book), and despite all his misogynic tirades and superhuman self-possession, he appears here in a

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

new light as a suffering and magnanimous figure. As a devoted revolutionary, however, Makar succeeds in controlling his emotions.

The only love story in the second book unadulterated by social or political themes is Razmyotnov's love for his wife, who committed suicide during the civil war after having been raped by the White Cossacks. This love has two attributes, separation and loss, which in Sholokhov's view are 'the sad friends and companions of almost every true love'.[9] Razmyotnov's love is unfolded in his moving reminiscences. A superb painter of love *in absentia*, Sholokhov rises here to his former height. The reminiscences strike a tragic undertone of irrevocability. They run parallel to the life in nature; in fact, they are provoked by a pair of pigeons that come to make their nest at Razmyotnov's house. Razmyotnov feeds them and the sight of the male pigeon, who leaves all the food for its mate while circling about her, makes Razmyotnov recall his own courtship, his marriage, and separation. Sholokhov continues:

> The pigeon would not touch the food on this day that shone in the April sun. Nor would Andrey Razmyotnov. No longer with misty but with tear-dimmed, unseeing eyes he looked through the window, and it was not the pigeons, not the caressing blue spring sky he saw beyond the window sash: there arose in his mind the sorrowful image of she whom once in his life, it seemed, he had loved more than life itself, but not for long, she from whom black death had separated him twelve years ago, perhaps on exactly such a glittering spring day.[10]

This passage echoes Russian folk poetry in its typical lyrical parallelism, negative beginnings, and fixed epithets. The entire vision is put into a single sentence as if not to interrupt the continuity of recollection. On the other hand, the several commas and the words 'it seemed' and 'perhaps' impart to it the natural slowness and uncertainty of a reminiscence. To enhance the lyrical effect, Sholokhov continues with plain but expressive details, such as Razmyotnov's tears dropping into the already over-salted soup, or the spoon that falls twice from his trembling hands. These observations are followed by a typical Sholokhov maxim, a kind of resumé of a lyrical passage which in this case reads: 'It happens in our life that not only the short-lived happiness of a human, but also that of a bird will evoke in some person with a wounded soul not envy, not a condescending smile, but oppressive memories, filled with an everlasting bitterness and pain'.

Razmyotnov goes to the graves of his wife and son and stands there with his grey head bowed low. At this point the author addresses the reader:

> And why did Andrey come here on this spring day that was radiant with the bright sun and brimming with awakening life? So that clutching his short strong fingers together and clenching his teeth, he could gaze with squinting eyes beyond the misty line of the horizon as if trying to discern in the smoky haze his forgotten youth, his short-lived happiness? Perhaps for that reason. Because the past which is dead but dear to the heart is always best relieved either in a cemetery or in the mute darkness of a sleepless night.[11]

Once again such typical traits of Sholokhov's art as the resumé and the author's digression, providing an indirect description, appear in this passage. But its significance extends beyond the formal aspects. It is one of the key passages of the book. Sholokhov expresses in it anew his idea of the unity of man and nature. The bright spring day, teeming with life, symbolises eternal renovation. The living, the dead, and nature form a single unity which cannot be destroyed or forgotten even at the grave of the dearest ones. The theme is underlined by the virtual repetiton of the entire passage at the very end of the novel, which may well be the place where Sholokhov chooses to state his innermost thoughts. Again Razmyotnov stands at the grave, and the words he says are the same he has already spoken in his reminiscences, and the same eternal nature surrounds him. These are the concluding lines of the novel:

> 'Not as I should, not neatly, have I kept your last abode, Evdokiya . . .' He leaned over, took a dry clod of clay, rubbed it in his

[9] Ibid., p. 649.
[10] Ibid., p. 599.
[11] Ibid., p. 601.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

palms, and in a voice already quite hollow said: 'And still I love you to this day, my unforgettable one, my only one for all my life . . . You see, there is never time . . . We seldom see each other . . . Forgive me, if you can, for all the bad I've done . . . For all I've done to hurt you, dead one . . .'

He stood there for a long time with bared head, as if he were listening and waiting for an answer; he stood motionless stooping like an old man. A warm wind blew in his face, a warm rain drizzled. . . . Beyond the Don the white lightning flashed, and Razmyotnov's stern and joyless eyes did not look downward any more, not at the caved-in edge of the grave so dear to him, but beyond the invisible line of the horizon where half the sky, again and again, was illuminated by the scarlet flames and where the last thunderstorm of the year, as majestic and violent as in a hot summer season, rumbled along awakening dormant nature to life.[12]

Thus the concluding lines of the novel strike a deep human note. Their effect, however, would not be so strong without the chapter giving Razmyotnov's reminiscences and his first visit to the grave. It may well be that this chapter was written for the end of the novel. Chronologically, it does not belong to the second book at all; its action is set in the spring of 1930, in April and May. Yet Sholokhov placed it some hundred pages away from the ending so that the reader's impression of Razmyotnov's love would still be fresh though not obtrusive.

THE third major component of the second book of *Virgin Soil Upturned*—the inserted stories—consists of a variety of narrative elements. Some of them are simple tales, told by the characters about the events of the past. The subject of others are contemporary occurrences narrated by the characters in the form of a very short story or an anecdote. Still others are actually episodes of the novel elaborated by the author and told as stories for their own sake. Such are the anecdotes about Nagulnov listening to a rooster's crowing at night and Razmyotnov shooting all the cats in the village to protect his pigeons. Almost all are characterised by their remoteness from the few dynamic elements of the plot. They fill the space in a plotless book and they also illustrate Sholokhov's increased preoccupation with the *skaz*, a story told by a character with all the peculiarities of his speech.

More often than not they are designed for humorous and comical effect. This is particularly true of the stories told by old Shchukar about himself, such as his being attacked by animals, beaten by his wife, or falsely accused of fathering a child, and so forth. The themes have the quality of folk tales and are simple and unpretentious. One of the main sources of humour is the disparity between Shchukar's words and actions and the real state of things. A coward, Shchukar brags about his heroism; a born liar, he talks about his impeccable truthfulness; impotent, he is sent to supervise a servicing and made to identify himself with the stud-horse. Funniest in the Shchukar stories is his vocabulary and his misuse of it. Shchukar's lexicon presents an incongruous mixture of the racy idiom of a popular story-teller with a variety of political, religious, and foreign terms. All the new words are misunderstood but well remembered and abundantly used, adding scores of semantic mistakes to the grammatical errors of the colourful Don Cossack's dialect.

Like Shchukar, Makar Nagulnov solemnly abuses the Russian language. His vocabulary is an agglomeration of various linguistic strata, notably the political and official. The meaning of terms in these categories is not always clear to him and he is prone to phrases such as 'several pieces of applications', 'depraved (*porochnye*) facts' instead of 'hard (*prochnye*) facts', mingling his lofty or official style with the coarse expressions of his native dialect. In contrast with the picturesque and spicy idioms of the Don Cossacks, Davydov's language is undistinguished, and also more literary in the second book than in the first.

However, neither the language nor the humour of the second part of *Virgin Soil Upturned* can compensate for the absence of the epic and lyrical qualities which were the strongest features of Sholokhov's talent. Voluntarily or not, he has refused to be the historian and artist of collectivisation. The epic on this theme still remains to be written.

[12] Ibid., p. 718.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

KAFKA AND THE COMMUNISTS

Jaroslav Dresler

Of the important figures of twentieth-century Western literature, none has been more systematically ignored in the Soviet Union than Franz Kafka. True, the Small Soviet Encyclopedia *gives him six lines (as many as to the sculptor Bogumil Kafka), and in recent years his name has been mentioned occasionally by the literary critics. But Western visitors have reported that even leading Soviet writers have been unfamiliar with Kafka's very name. There are, however, certain signs that, preoccupied as they now are with modern Western literature, the Soviet critics will soon reach Kafka; such official encounters apart, there is some evidence of interest in Kafka in Soviet avant-garde circles. In the 'popular democracies' it has been apparent for some years; books on Kafce have been published recently in Poland (Roman Karst,* Drogi samotnosci: Rzecz o Franzu Kafke, *Warsaw, 1960), and the East German* Deutsches Schriftsteller Lexikon *(Weimar, 1960), while for a variety of reasons rejecting Kafka's work, commends his social criticism and anti-imperialism* (Amerika!), *as well as his sensibility and humanism. Deeply significant is the way the Kafka heritage is now treated in his native Prague. Mr. Dresler's review is of more than exclusively Czechoslovak interest.*

Since this article was written, the Artia publishing house of Prague has issued an illustrated volume, in German and English, containing 84 photographs of old Prague, with appropriate references to Kafka's writings (Kafka lebte in Prag). *The most remarkable thing about this album is the short note in the publisher's catalogue: 'For export only'. As a writer likely to earn foreign currency and/or literary respectability abroad, Kafka has now been rehabilitated.*

WHEN the well-known American journalist Harrison Salisbury visited Prague in the autumn of 1957, he spoke to a dozen leading Czech writers during a short break between landing and continuing his flight. Soon afterwards he reported on his impressions of the conversation in the *New York Times*. Salisbury had previously been in Moscow, where Franz Kafka was still considered *persona non grata*, and he was therefore astonished to be told by the then Director of the publishing firm of the Writers' Association, Ladislav Fikar, that the Czech translation of Kafka's *The Trial* was just being printed. Simplifying the matter somewhat, Salisbury commented that *The Trial* was probably the most profound work ever written against dictatorship.

In any case it was a new situation in Czechoslovakia. During his lifetime Kafka's friend Milena Jesenska translated some of his prose works into Czech. After his death the majority of his works were also translated in due course, but as they appeared for the most part in small bibliophile editions, this Prague writer remained almost completely unknown to the Czech public. When André Breton came to Prague in the mid-thirties to found the Czech Surrealist Group, he discovered that the avant-garde writers there had not the slightest idea of Kafka. Inspired by Breton, the Prague surrealists arranged for a Czech edition of Kafka's *The Castle*, giving it the misleading sub-title 'A surrealist novel'. During the second world war Kafka was, needless to say, prohibited in Prague.

Soon after the war, however, an echo of his posthumous world-wide success reached his native city, but apart from a number of essays by his Czech interpreter and translator Pavel Eisner, Kafka failed to find a place in the opening stage of the people's democracy. It was probably intended to suppress the memory of his friend Jesenska as well: she had died in Ravensbruck concentration camp. After Kafka's death she had been for many years a communist, but in the thirties she was excluded from the party as an alleged Trotskyite. This was, albeit indirectly, a further reason for saying nothing about Kafka himself. With the year 1948 came another strict prohibition, and thereafter Kafka's name appeared from time to time merely as an example of a 'decadent capitalistic writer, hostile to the people's democracy'. It was not until 1957, when the brief thaw was

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

at its height in Czechoslovakia, that the first studies of Kafka began to appear in Prague and also several of his prose works.

In his works Kafka never expressed any views on his own time or on contemporary events. But he did, as his friends have recorded, comment very forthrightly at times on the outside world in private conversation.

It will suffice to refer to the *Conversations with Kafka* by Gustav Janouch (Frankfurt on Main, 1951), the authenticity of which has not so far been contested by anyone. Janouch writes (p. 71):

> We met a large group of workmen marching to a meeting with flags and banners. Kafka said: 'These people are self-confident and self-assured and in such a good mood. They have command of the street and they also imagine they have command of the world. But in fact they are mistaken. Behind them already are the secretaries, officials, professional politicians, and all the modern sultans whose path to power they are preparing'
>
> 'You don't believe in the power of the masses?'
>
> 'I see it, this formless, seemingly wild, power of the masses, yearning to be tamed and formed. At the end of every really revolutionary development there appears a Napoleon Bonaparte.'
>
> 'You don't believe in a further extension of the Russian Revolution?'
>
> Kafka was silent for a moment, then he said: 'The more a flood spreads, the more shallow and muddy the water becomes. The revolution evaporates and all that remains is the slime of a new bureaucracy. The fetters of tormented humanity are made of office paper'.

It seems rather absurd that after more than thirty years a number of communist critics in Prague have tried to make a 'progressive' author out of Kafka. The question whether Kafka was a socialist is, however, more complicated. The main thesis of Klaus Wagenbach's book [1] is that 'socialism—a point that has so far been overlooked—was of decisive importance for Kafka throughout his life'. It would take us too far from our main topic to discuss this statement here.

[1] *Franz Kafka, Eine Biographie seiner Jugend, 1883–1912* (Berne, 1958), p. 62.

DURING the thaw in Prague, when it was impossible to keep Kafka on the Communist Index any longer, it became necessary for the party to express its views on the matter. This was done in an article by Pavel Reiman which first appeared in German in a somewhat different form.[2] The passages to be quoted here are with one exception almost the same in both versions.

Reiman describes Kafka's initial position as follows (this passage does not appear in the German version of his article):

> He is a representative of the bourgeois intelligentsia which is beginning to be aware of the rottenness of the capitalist system but is not yet capable of drawing socialist conclusions from an examination of its contradictions and which therefore succumbs to despair.

There are accordingly two possibilities for communist interpreters of Kafka: either they can condemn him because he 'did not draw socialist conclusions from the rottenness of the capitalist system', or they can weigh his 'errors' against his 'merits' and acquit him. Reiman tries to take the second of these two lines. He says that in the short story *The Thorn Bush* the author admits quite frankly that

> he lost his way in the jungle of prevailing social conditions and in spite of all his efforts he could not find his way and could not cope with the problems of life. The fact that it was a public park where he lost his

[2] 'Spolecenska problematika v Kafkovych romanech', in *Nova mysl* (the central ideological organ of the Czech Communist Party) January 1958, p. 52. 'Die gesellschaftliche Problematik in Kafkas Romanen', in *Weimarer Beiträge*, 1957, pp. 599–618. Pavel Reiman (or Paul Reimann as he calls himself when he writes in German) comes from the same German-Jewish milieu as Kafka himself but was born much later; for many years he played the part of a mere amateur in the literary world, being mainly concerned with the history of the party and its propaganda. After 1948, he became a leading official of the Department for Cultural Propaganda of the Central Committee of the Czech Communist Party and a member of the Central Council for Publications, and often attacked very sharply writers who deviated from the party line. He tried to remove a number of Slovak writers whom he called 'bourgeois nationalists'. In the Slansky trial he was interrogated as a witness for the prosecution. He maintained that he had 'given warning against the activities of the Zionists on the Central Committee of the party for a long time'.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

way and that no one came to his assistance, not even the park keeper, turned a purely subjective experience into a criticism of existing social conditions.

It is true that Reiman subsequently remarked that 'Kafka did not see the other aspect of the development which only Marx and Engels were capable of exposing'. Nevertheless, he tries repeatedly to make Kafka acceptable from the point of view of the people's democracy. Thus he writes concerning *The Trial*:

> The whole conception of his most important novel proves that Kafka was here criticising bourgeois society quite independently.

Reiman only mentions in passing that Kafka's *The Trial* is also interesting from the class point of view because this novel 'makes a Czech village which is split in two—between the landowner and the peasants—the scene of the action'.

AS Max Brod has demonstrated (for example in his *Franz Kafka, Eine Biographie*, p. 271), Kafka's *The Trial* was in fact inspired by a literary source, not by Marxist theories on the class war. The source he used was a novel entitled *The Grandmother* by the Czech writer Bozena Nemcova, in which the action occurs in exactly the same place as in *The Trial*. From this novel Kafka also borrowed a few details and minor episodes, in a modified form. Here again, however, it would take us too far to discuss this matter in detail. It is an established fact that in all three of his novels Kafka was inspired by literary sources: in *America* by Dickens' *David Copperfield*; in *The Trial* by *Labyrinth of the World and Paradise of the Heart*, by Jan Amos Komensky-Comenius. He was not influenced by Marxist literature. No Marxist books were found in his library and no excerpts from such literature in his notes.

As a religious interpretation of Kafka similar to Brod's has recently come to the fore in Czechoslovakia, it is interesting to see what Reiman has to say on this:

> In his second large work, *Franz Kafka's Faith and Doctrine*, Max Brod transformed Kafka into a Jewish religious prophet and advocate of the Zionist gospel, although it is well known that Kafka himself compared Jewish religious customs with those of African savage tribes and called them a crude superstition.

The purpose of Reiman's commentary is quite clear: it simply offers a justification for the publication and discussion of Kafka's works. It would have been simpler to say so outright. There is, incidentally, an unconsciously humorous side to all this. Reiman wrote:

> We must forgo discussing in detail the widespread reactionary Kafka legend which has resulted from the present Kafka vogue in several countries. We shall merely note that there are a number of variants of the legend: the one represented by Max Brod is Zionist, and there are also Catholic, Protestant, existentialist and psychoanalytical versions which fortunately cancel one another out, since the representatives of all these various tendencies extract individual pages from Kafka's work and expose themselves to contradiction at the hand of their opponents, who likewise claim Kafka for themselves. What they all have in common is that none of them proceeds from what Kafka himself actually wrote. They impose on him the interpretation which happens to suit them.

Soon after the appearance of this article there arose a large number of communist Kafka legends whose authors did precisely that! There are, one might say, as many Marxisms as Marxists, at least in relation to Kafka.

It was not until a year later that Jiri Hajek, a critic of the middle generation, formerly well known as a dogmatic Stalinist, reacted to Reiman's article in a short polemical reference in *The Controversy concerning Franz Kafka*.[3] He wrote:

> . . . For a long time to come it will not be pointless and superfluous to occupy ourselves with Kafka's work, to think about it and defend it against Western and our own native snobbery (for which the whole of Kafka is no more than a pleasantly tempting bonbon, a spice to season the emptiness and boredom of its addicts), and also against markedly reactionary attempts to misuse his work for the propagation of all kinds of mystical whims and despair about the possibility of changing and improving human

[3] 'Spor o Franze Kafku', *Tvorba*, 8 January 1959.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

affairs. In my view these tendencies cannot be countered by simplified sociological interpretations of Kafka, traces of which are to be found even in certain passages of P. Reiman's otherwise meritorious article. To interpret Kafka's work, for example *The Trial*, as a deliberately symbolical reflection of social relationships in the capitalist system or as a direct attack on the abstract dehumanisation of legal institutions in a capitalist society is, to say the least, to put more into Kafka than he contains.

After a number of attempts to offer an interpretation of *The Trial* and *The Castle* different from that of Reiman, Hajek continues:

I see no reason why we should shun the influence of Kafka. What we cannot remain indifferent to is the spread of a Kafka cult of Western origin to which, for example, two young German scholars, Dubsky and Hrbek, are devoting themselves, under the guise of profound expert knowledge. Apparently it has never occurred to these Kafka specialists to consider the social context and the results of these extremely 'specialist' Western discussions of Kafka.

The two young scholars referred to, Vladmir Dubsky and Mojmir Hrbek, were the first who dared to write about Kafka even before the appearance of Reiman's article.[4] It is true that their interpretation claims to be Marxist, but it is based on the works of the *young* Marx whose views have proved such a great attraction above all to all kinds of revisionists. The two young scholars wrote as follows:

The fate of modern man is characterised by the shadow of alienation. . . . The mechanisation of life evokes the attitude to the problems of existence, fear and unrest, expressed by the poets of the last and the present century . . . Franz Kafka felt the same way. The atmosphere of alienation forms the undertone of his whole work. Kafka was the first, since the time of Dostoevsky, to express the feelings of fear, estrangement, and also of hope without deceit, with absolute truthfulness and without literary mannerism.

Two things appear to emerge quite clearly from what has been said so far: when pressure from above has ceased, if only partially and temporarily, Marxism has no longer been regarded as a monolithic doctrine, at any rate not in such special departments as aesthetics and literary criticism. Secondly, Marxist literary theory is incapable of doing justice to a work of art that stands beyond socialist realism altogether. 'Undialectical' antitheses inevitably arise which can only be overcome by new pressure from above.

ON 3 July 1958, the 75th anniversary of Kafka's birthday, the long heralded translation of *The Trial* appeared in an edition of 10,000 copies which was sold out before publication day. The two young scholars Dubsky and Hrbek entered the fray once more. Having learnt from Jiri Hajek how to write an article on such a delicate and difficult question, they based their review on a violent attack on Kafka's Western interpreters and editors.[5] From their review the reader would inevitably gain the impression that the whole of Kafka had been thoroughly adulterated by the editions of Max Brod. Without entering into details and also without quoting a single complete sentence, they referred to Friedrich Beissner, Emil Staiger, Wolfgang Kayser, Hermann Uyttersprot and many others. They then brought in Willy Haas as their chief witness:

Willy Haas, who prepared the *Letters to Milena* for the press, says in his epilogue that he omitted all Kafka's derogatory remarks about his Prague acquaintances—including the editor.

Replying to this in a broadcast talk in December 1958, Willy Haas said:

This is absolute nonsense. I have never said, written, or done any such thing. I have merely omitted some very bitter and, I believe, insulting remarks by Kafka about a number of women who are still alive. But I have left out nothing of any public interest: none of his literary or political judgments, not one word about the Jews, or the Czechs, or any public figure, only certain sharp, unjustly sharp remarks about women.

Probably even these attacks on Western authors were not considered an adequate atonement for the previous 'revisionist' errors of the two young scholars. Soon afterwards they were

[4] 'O Franzi Kafkovi' *Novy zivot*, April 1957, pp. 415–35.

[5] 'Kafkuv Proces', *Kveten*, September 1958, pp. 620–23.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

attacked by the party official Jaroslav Sedlak. In his article 'On increasing activity on the cultural front'[6] he compared them with the 'revisionists' Pasternak, Dudintsev, Koestler, Malraux, Silone, Orwell and Jiri Karnet (a Czech poet who lives in New York).

> In recent times it has become the fashion with some critics to put an heroic gloss on the errors of certain writers and to consider the mutual contradictions and ambiguities of their works as examples of supreme and typically modern art. This is the line taken by Dubsky and Hrbek. . . . To be sure, Kafka himself was involved in these contradictions, but he was very far from understanding what lay behind them and he certainly did not stand clearly on the side of the proletariat, which even in his time was the only uncompromising revolutionary social force. . . . Nevertheless we do not reproach the authors of the review for overlooking the fact that in bourgeois literature Kafka is credited not only with the vision of the Fascism that was to come, and which Dubsky and Hrbek discuss, but also with the 'vision' of the alleged rule of bureaucracy in the socialist states. Kafka is even quoted in connection with one of the wildest anti-socialist calumnies, George Orwell's novel *1984*. The two comrades, Dubsky and Hrbek, are evidently unaware of this particular interpretation of Kafka, since it is difficult to imagine that they could quote as one of the existing interpretations of Kafka's work the view that *The Trial* is a symbol of man's subjugation to 'the bureaucratic machinery of the modern state' and not prefer to write clearly and in the Marxist sense of the bourgeois state.

EISNER'S translation of *The Trial* appeared almost the very day that the translator died. Like Kafka a native of Prague and a German Jew, Eisner opted for the Czech language and literature after the first world war and published his works in Czech, although until the second world war he worked on the editorial staff of the *Prager Presse* and devoted his whole life to a better understanding between Germans, Jews, and Czechs. He translated many works from German into Czech, including, for example, almost all the works of Thomas Mann, and he edited several German anthologies of Czech poetry. As a Kafka specialist he enjoyed an international reputation. In 1950 he published in the USA a study of Kafka and Prague. His interpretation was always intermediate between the social-historical and the religious-contemplative approach. Eisner also followed this middle line in his epilogue to *The Trial*. On the mysterious guilt of the chief character, Joseph K., he wrote:

> Wherein lies his mortal sin, his own and that of men like him? He is decent but damned. He does not knowingly do harm to anyone but still less does he live for anyone or anything, still less does he sacrifice himself for anything. He has not even a friend, only good acquaintances at a table in a restaurant, who respect him for his professional renown. He stands all on his own. He is a lukewarm person and what happens to such people was stated thousands of years ago. There is no absolution for the guilt of which they are unaware, no redeeming acquittal. They will not enter through the gate of the law.

After a detailed social and historical examination, Eisner sums up by saying that his analysis has the advantage that 'the student of social ethics and the theologian can agree about it, since both are inevitably concerned with the balance-sheet of human existence, with the relationship between credit and debit in the book of life'. Eisner went on to state explicitly that his interpretation came nearest to that of Willy Haas.

Soon after this the Protestant *Krest'anska revue* (September 1958) published a detailed review of the translation and of Eisner's epilogue by the theologian Josef Svoboda under the title 'Without Guilt?'

> The ultimate and supreme aspect of *The Trial* in which the hearing of the managing clerk Joseph K. takes place is the theological aspect. In the last resort it is an image of the Last Judgment of God himself. Is it possible to arrive at a more sensitive understanding of Kafka's work than that to which Pavel Eisner leads us when he hears the word written thousands of years ago sounding over the life of that man whom we resemble so often and in so many respects? We come to see that in spite of all our industry, decency and respectability, the warning still resounds: 'I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So

[6] *Literarni noviny*, 23 December 1958.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> because thou art lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spew thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and have gotten riches, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art the wretched one and miserable and poor and blind and naked' (Revelation, iii, 15–17). And could Pavel Eisner have gone any further or have ended his life more worthily than with the study of Kafka's *The Trial*, the appearance of which he survived only by a few days? Do his prophetic words not represent a binding legacy?

Oddly enough, Eisner's epilogue was attacked by only one writer, the well-known Slav critic Jan Rozner[7]:

> This study is typical of all our previous literature on Kafka: proceeding from a few elementary biographical facts . . . it passes to cheap sociological generalisations . . . absurdities grow on this tree of knowledge such as appeared in Kafka's imagination only when he was in a feverish trance. . . . Judge for yourself whether we are not here in the world of Kafka's most absurd phantasmagoria: What is Kafka here really—a half-mad sufferer from hysteria or a wild sadist, a ghostly forerunner of Hitler, when by his trial he liquidates a man only on account of his bourgeois attitude to life? It would perhaps have been better in this case, if that is what Kafka really was, to have complied with his will and burnt all his manuscripts, including *The Trial*. . . . Let us therefore rather forget these cabaret-like jokes of the Czech author.

In his own interpretation, which is unimportant in this context, Rozner concludes by stating that 'Kafka is typical of a period of transition and crisis. In German literature he stands between Thomas Mann and Brecht.'

AS a final contribution to this discussion on Kafka, which has lasted for over two years, we may consider an article by the young critic Oleg Sus which appeared under the characteristic heading *Kafka or the Confusion of Tongues*.[8] Sus has only been publishing articles since 1956, but during the thaw he stood somewhat apart from the prevailing critical trend and did not commit himself. He sums up in a few sentences which need no commentary:

> The whole situation does not appear to be that the West has a thoroughly 'adulterated' Kafka and we have the only 'genuine' one. . . . Hajek, for example, comes to the aid of Kafka by using as an argument against the idealist critics the gloomy, bloody, real and materialistic character of Kafka's symbolism. Allow me to shake my head over this praise. Does the critic really know what he is talking about? Symbolism? Very well then, but, for heaven's sake, with moderation. Some of the hard-working interpreters celebrate real orgies over Kafka's books. The mania for finding the 'true', hidden meaning, leads to the strangest adventures. It is possible to 'discover' anything you want to discover. As Weltsch said, it is possible to interpret *The Trial* even as a symbol of the course taken by an incurable case of tuberculosis. . . . To make myself quite clear, let me finish by saying that the essence of Kafka is not a 'materialistic' symbolism.

The Prague discussion on Kafka has come to nothing. It was merely an example of how variously communists express themselves on a concrete literary question when there is no official party directive or when the pressure from above slackens. Since the recent tightening-up in Prague, Kafka has again become *persona non grata*.

Postscript

Among other recent writings on Kafka we would draw attention to articles by Oleg Sus in *Svetova Literatura*, 1960, 4, and Eduard Goldstücker in *Plamen*, 1960, 9. The first deals with two articles by Klaus Hermsdorf, but is concerned only with their content, not with the ideological dispute about Kafka at that time. The second, entitled 'Profile of Prague German Poetry fifty years ago', originally written in German for a collection of essays on German themes published by the Charles University of Prague, is a sociological interpretation of the work of Werfel, Kafka, and Rilke in relation to their milieu. In the context of the present article, Goldstücker as revealed in his essay is of greater interest than its subject; writer and critic, he once served as Czech Ambassador in Israel, and at the Slansky trial was sentenced to life imprisonment. He was released during the thaw. Today he lectures on modern German literature at the Charles University.

[7] *Slovenske Pohl'ady*, February 1959, pp. 125–40.
[8] *Host do domu*, March 1959.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Boris Pasternak
SOCHINENIA (Works)

In Russian

Edited by Gleb Struve and Boris Filipoff with introductions by Wladimir Weidlé and a Foreword by Countess Jacqueline de Proyart

Hailed in the twenties as a major poet, suppressed in the fifties as pro-Western, the Nobel Prize winning Boris Pasternak remains the major Russian writer of the century: an innovator who broke with traditional forms; an artist whose sharp feeling for words reveals itself here in the original texts; the savant who expressed fearlessly and completely Russian modernism. This is the first edition in any language of his collected writings. In three volumes: Early Poetry 1912–1932 (Rannie stikhi); Short Prose 1915–1958 (Proza); Later Poetry and Miscellaneous Writings (Stat'i i stikhi)
to be published this spring
each volume 55s.; 150s. the set

Mikhail Zoshchenko
IZBRANNOE
(Selected Stories) **In Russian**

Edited, with an introduction, by Marc Slonim

Here in the original Russian, in the twisted idiom of the half-baked Communist and the earthy speech of the Soviet citizen, is Zoshchenko's best work
1960 42s.

Boris Pasternak POEMS

Translated by Eugene M. Kayden

"In this faithfully wrought translation by Eugene Kayden more than a glint of Pasternak's poetic genius filters through; whole stanzas blaze with life and passion."—*Time* 1959 25s.

Alexander Sukhovo-Kobylin
KRECHINSKY'S WEDDING

Translated by Robert Magidoff

From the theatre of Gogol and Chekhov comes this rollicking Russian farce—as popular with the Communist worker today as it was with the court of Alexander II. The translator, Robert Magidoff, a wartime correspondent in Moscow, is the author of several books, including *The Kremlin Versus the People* and *In Anger and Pity—Report on Russia.*
to be published this spring 28s.

George Kish
ECONOMIC ATLAS OF THE SOVIET UNION

"An accurate and authoritative cartographic presentation of long-neglected aspects of the Soviet economy . . . simple enough for the non-expert and at the same time accurate and authoritative enough for the specialist."—Theodore Shabad, *New York Times*
65 maps in two colours 1960 63s.

THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN PRESS
Ann Arbor, Michigan, U.S.A.

In the United Kingdom, Eire, and Africa:
The Cresset Press,
11 Fitzroy Square, London, W.1

In Australasia:
Ure Smith Pty. Limited,
166 Phillip Street, Sydney, Australia

In Canada:
Ambassador Books Limited,
370 Alliance Avenue, Toronto 9, Ontario

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

1960: THE LITERARY HARVEST

Barbara Bode

ACCORDING to the Soviet writer Georgi Gulia there are two kinds of literature. In his long short story *The Chestnut House* (*Oktyabr*, No. 9, 1960) he writes:

'All world literature in the course of four thousand years has dealt with the vicissitudes of human destiny. But there were also the troubadours, paid to sing at the feast. These, however, are all but forgotten . . . and no one has the power to bring them back to life'.

In other words, we are to distinguish between lasting world literature and ephemeral, i.e. time-serving, literature.

In his memoirs *People, Years, Life* (*Novy Mir*, Nos. 8, 9, 10, 1960), Ilya Ehrenburg offers the following reflections with regard to the works of world literature:

'Every book is a confession, while the book of reminiscences is a confession without an attempt by the writer to hide behind the shadows of fictional characters'.

Accepting these two definitions by Gulia and Ehrenburg, the salient features of Soviet literature in the last two years, and in particular 1960, would appear to be, on the one hand, a growing number of works dealing with the vicissitudes of human destiny and, consequently, falling into the category of confessions; and, on the other, a decline of 'troubadour' literature.

In order to understand the life, the hopes, and the aspirations of the Russian people today, one must pay particular attention to the first kind of literature and then complete the picture by glancing at the propagandist works.

Let us consider first 'confessional' literature.

The eternal struggle between Good and Evil, the unfathomable tragedy that lies at its heart, is the theme of Tendryakov's *The Three, The Seven and the Ace*. Its form is as brilliantly contrived as its content. It is outstanding among those published last year, and indeed for several years past.[1]

The youth of Soviet Russia, educated to be politically and intellectually intolerant, has in the last few years been displaying quite the contrary characteristics. In the propaganda novel of V. Kozhevnikov, *Introducing Baluev* (*Znamya*, No. 4, 1960), which falls into the category of 'troubadour' literature, the son of an important party functionary says of a foreign author whose books he has been reading, 'He is not a Marxist, quite the reverse, but he is gifted and in his own way truthful'.

In this single sentence several tenets of communist ideology are violated all at once. If the author is 'not a Marxist, quite the reverse', then he is an anti-Marxist. If he is an anti-Marxist, can he be gifted, let alone truthful? For real talent and truth are to be found only in Marxism. If the author is truthful 'in his own way', it follows that the young man admits the existence not merely of one single communist truth, but of a whole series of subjective human truths.

This is the beginning of tolerance. Its source can be found in the spiritual-religious world, the same world which we discover in Tendryakov's story.

The political aspect of tolerance is touched upon in passing by Ilya Ehrenburg in his memoirs. Writing of his adolescence, he quotes his father's answer to his own passionate declaration that Russia needs a revolution: 'You may be right . . . But the most important thing is tolerance' (*Novy Mir*, No. 8, 1960).

This contrasts sharply with the words of Lenin, whom the author quotes a little further on: 'But I cannot often listen to music . . . one would like to talk sweet nonsense and pat people on the head who, living in a squalid hell, can create such beauty. But today one must pat no one on the head, they will bite your hand off; one must strike on the head, strike pitilessly, even though, ideally, we are against all forms of violence. . . .'

AN answer to intolerance with regard to the Germans in wartime is to be found in V. Nekrasov's short story 'The Second Night' (*Novy Mir*, No. 5, 1960). The action takes place

[1] See Tibor Meray's article, p. 118.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in the 1941–45 war. Lenka, a young lad nicknamed 'the philosopher' by his comrades, because he likes to meditate about the world, and who understands politics 'no better than higher mathematics', is sent to the front. On the second night the captain takes him out on a reconnaissance. The captain is a fighting type, an ideal hero in the eyes of the inexperienced Lenka. In the darkness and stillness of the night, they 'liquidate' the German post. It is Lenka who strangles the German sentry with his own hands. On their return to their unit they are greeted like heroes. But Lenka is tormented by the act of his murder: '. . . somehow he did not feel like seeing anyone. For some reason, he found himself shivering all the time'.

On the other hand, his boyish dream comes true: the captain is preparing a drinking spree for the two of them. He brings the brandy and then goes through the pocket-book of the dead German. There are photographs in it, showing a smiling young lad, not unlike Lenka, on the beach with his girl, with relatives, alone.

The captain hands the photographs to Lenka with a cynical grin:

'Lenka could not take his eyes off the snapshot, the smiling, cheerful, snub-nosed face. There on the battle-field, by the blown-up pear-tree, he had not seen this face. But this neck, the strong, round neck . . . He turned away, he could not look . . .'

It is important to bear in mind the silent, adolescent hero-worship of the novice Lenka for the experienced captain, his timidity and inexperience of 'politics', in order to appreciate fully the following passage:

'Come on, leave those photographs. Why, he can't take his eyes off the golden-locked Gretchen'.

Lenka silently handed him the snapshots.

'The popsy is not bad, eh?' With one eye closed, the captain looked at the photograph. 'The dead man obviously knew what's what . . .'

Lenka frowned at the captain, then dropped his eyes.

'Don't talk like that, comrade captain.'

The brandy glasses are filled. The captain proposes they should drink to Lenka's second night of battle, to his 'acquaintance' with the murdered young German.

'May I go now, comrade captain?'

He says this quietly but firmly. He has to put an end to the terrible comedy caused by the killing of a man, a young lad like himself. And he goes away.

But this is not the climax of the story. In the same context of the eternal struggle between good and evil, the climax comes quietly at the end. Lenka, tired out from his experiences and impressions, is asleep. The captain bends over him, in doubt whether to wake him or not. He feels it is a pity to have to wake up this exhausted boy, curled up on the ground. 'But perhaps', says the author, 'perhaps it was not only a case of pity; maybe the captain was simply deferring the moment when this lad would awake, open his eyes and look at him.'

This theme, of the triumph of purity and goodness over evil and corruption, so profoundly characteristic of the classical Russian writers, is at present dominant in Soviet literature. In the centre of the universe stands man. Not Man with a capital M as in Maxim Gorki ('Man—this word has a proud ring!'), but the small, Chekhovian man whose soul, in a Dostoevskian sense, is the arena for the constant struggle of God with the devil.

It is man's conscience that preoccupies young Soviet writers like Y. Nagibin, Y. Kazakov, V. Tendryakov, A. Kuznetsov, A. Pristavkin and others. They set themselves the task of discovering the secret of its content and origin. A typical example is Kozhevnikov's story *Apparition*, also published in 1960. It tells of a young man, who during the civil war in Russia finds himself in hospital. As he lies delirious from typhoid fever, a beautiful girl's face bends over him. He thinks that it is his fiancée who has come to nurse him. But when he comes to, he finds that the only girl who has been tending him is a nurse, a hunchback with a young face and the body of an old woman. In the boredom of the sickroom, dreaming of his far-away fiancée, he gets used to the nurse and even flirts a little with her out of a kind of curiosity. The girl blossoms under the influence of a first love that is humble and undemanding, because

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

she knows she is a cripple. Her devotion expresses itself in service to the beloved. She nurses him back to health, saves him from hunger, gets him on his feet. One stormy winter day he leaves the hospital. She runs after him with her limping gait, without even bothering to put a coat on, but his irritation with her only grows. In silence, without saying goodbye, without even thanking her for her trouble, he goes out into the world, 'without pity, without sorrow, without shame'.

This small, unremarkable episode becomes for the hero of the story a tragedy of unappeased conscience. Soon after this event he begins to search anxiously for the hunchbacked nurse, but he cannot find her. That very day, on her return to the hospital, the girl packed her belongings and went, no one knows where:

'She has gone . . . out into the snow, into the cold. Why? . . . Where are you, my poor crippled one? Where are you, my sorrowful one?' asks the young man.

He lets himself go completely. Life loses its meaning for him. Then another girl crosses his path, he marries, and his life goes by happily. Old age comes. His wife dies and her image 'silently fades from his memory, leaving nothing but a dim blur'.

'But I cannot forget the crippled hospital nurse. I cannot get over my heavy sense of guilt. What happened to me then, why was I so obtuse and cruel? Why didn't I stop to talk to her, why didn't I tell her that I would remember her? For indeed, I do remember her!'

STORIES such as these fill what was a few years ago a huge void, the desert artificially created by communist ideology. The living human being had been displaced by an abstraction; love, friendship, beauty, faith were systematically suppressed in the soul of man.

A typical instance is quoted by L. Leonov in his novel *The Russian Forest*, in which he describes the reaction of a young Komsomol member before the statue of Aphrodite: the youth feels nothing but a desire to cover her nakedness. His father exclaims in despair: 'What are you doing? Don't throw stones . . . It might take offence and disappear from the world for a long time. Don't you realise that what you see before you is human beauty?'

Young Russia grew up within this void. It is possible that this is what Dudintsev had in mind when he wrote of the continent deprived of sun. The same preoccupation is apparent in the writing of Kron and Kaverin.

In his sketch 'Afloat and at Anchor' (*Novy Mir*, No. 10, 1960) Kron raises, as if incidentally, an interesting thought about the difference between relics and souvenirs. According to him, souvenirs can be bought, while relics are bound up with the emotional life of a given people, family, or man.

'We have many such relics', writes Kron, 'but we do not always know how to use the power locked in them for the emotional education of the young generation. This is a very important subject. Man should be emotionally literate.'

The same theme is developed by V. Kaverin in his short story 'A Piece of Glass' (*Novy Mir*, No. 8, 1960). It is not a question of generations, but of individuals, he says. The young can be old and the old young. In this particular instance, if people are to be classified according to generations, then it can be said that the older generation has not lost that freshness, that youthfulness of feeling, that 'emotional literacy' which, on the whole, is lacking in the young generation. There are definite ideological, political and social reasons for this difference; totalitarian regimes suppress the emotional forces in man, and this tendency is intensified by the development of our technical civilisation.

The gifted young scientist Petya Uglov is carried away by his scientific activity, but he is deficient precisely in 'emotional literacy'. Sent to a Leningrad scientific institute, he meets two professors, representing opposite ideological poles. Petya is sent from one to the other of the two adversaries like a football, unable to obtain that piece of special glass for which he has come. His psychological mistake is due to his ignorance of and indifference to human nature.

'Thus, for instance, he understood scientists as a type, their tactics and strategy, their prejudices and defects. But the world of living, simple feelings, unconnected with the exercise

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of a profession, was unknown to Petya Uglov as to the majority of his contemporaries, who remained basically underdeveloped in the art of human relationships, in love, in their capacity to appreciate beauty and to feel rapture.'

'Emotional literacy' is closely linked by Kaverin to the moral question.

'Although he did not know himself at all well, he guessed that truth, even when it is inopportune, may turn out to be a magic key that reveals all that is best in people.' Petya's diplomatic lie does not help him, but his confession that in the professor's absence he pocketed the precious piece of glass, opens for him the old man's heart.

Truth, its pursuit, and its emotional acceptance by the young is the main theme of the story 'The Difficult Test', by N. Dubov (*Novy Mir*, Nos 9, 10, 1960).

What is truth? This question troubles the young worker Alyosha, an orphan raised in a children's home. He sees much evil, injustice, and deceit at the works. His friend's promotion is engineered, as usual, by underhand means. Alyosha, honest, frank, and truthful, cannot bear such intrigues. On the factory wall-newspaper which praises his promoted friend, he writes in big letters 'Swindle'. His trials, which begin from this moment of protest, end with his dismissal from the works and his eviction from the hostel. During such an upheaval it is impossible for him not to ask himself what truth is, where it is to be found, and whether it really exists.

Alyosha questions an old worker who is his friend. The latter replies: 'Truth is truth . . . only some ride on top of it, others crawl under it. Everyone wants to bridle it in his own way and turn it round to his side. . . . There are as many judges as there are people, everyone judges in his own way. That which is profitable and convenient for a man, becomes his truth.'

Horrified, the youth asks:

'But isn't there a truth for all, a genuine one?'

'Of course! Certainly there is! Only, at that one too, everyone looks from his own little corner. And to everyone it seems that from his little corner it can be seen best and is the most correct. . . . You may talk your head off, but words do not help. However, when life itself rubs it in, that is another matter . . . then it is the whole truth and it is clearly revealed.'

To suppress in man the emotional understanding of the surrounding world, is to suppress the greater part of human personality. The depersonalised youth of today, educated for the most part only in the technical field, is profoundly disturbing to all who are not indifferent to their country's fate.

The same old workman is teaching Alyosha how to live in the right way:

'Brother, you have to work out everything with your own mind. Otherwise they will tell you today that a thing is white, you will believe them, and tomorrow that the same thing is black, and again you'll believe them.'

'No.'

'Oh yes, you will. All you have in you is merely what they have filled your ears with. And you can fill them with anything. Or worse still, you will no longer believe anyone. And that is the end of everything, when a person does not believe in anything.'

The same mood is evident in the words of the young people themselves. They no longer find communist propaganda inspiring or attractive. What remains in it is the element of compulsion and constraint: think thus! act thus! In a conversation between Alyosha, his girl friend Natasha, and the narrow-minded shock-worker Victor, Natasha says, 'I think the most important thing is how you live always, not merely from day to day'.

Victor believes that the aim of life 'is the same for all—to build communism'. Natasha asks: 'What about your personal aim? Alyosha and I have been thinking that we must always ask ourselves what and why? Why is it so and not otherwise? One must think about everything and be responsible for everything'.

Victor, who like a good shock-worker, has no use for subtleties, says: 'One must live simply, without inventing things'.

Natasha: 'What, let them think for you, decide for you? Go where they push you, do as they tell you? That is how sheep live'.

Particularly interesting in this story is a secondary character, Fyodr Kopeyka, a worker who has begun his career in a party post in the communist youth organisation. His father's

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

attitude to such a job is significant: he is ashamed of his son's work and advises him to carry sacks rather than be a pen-pusher. Fyodr himself rebels inwardly because he understands that people like him 'merely appeal for enthusiasm, while others work'. Not surprisingly, such feelings are encouraged by the attitude of the workers themselves towards the party functionary.

Fyodr's rebellion is termed by the party 'unhealthy tendencies', 'demagogic, subversive thoughts' and 'attacks on the leadership'.

DISCUSSIONS among young people about the aim of life, the meaning of life, appear both in sincere and in tendentious writings.

Two novellas, 'Save our Souls' by S. Lvov (*Yunost*, No. 2, 1960), and 'Whirlpool', by O. Polukhin (*Molodaya Gvardiya*, No. 2, 1960)—both papers cater for the young—were published on the eve of Easter. Though no doubt intended to discourage religious inclinations, both are illuminating.

'Save our Souls' is the story of a young man who, owing to the circumstances of his life and a bent to meditation, decides not to become a doctor and enters a theological seminary. At the end of the story, influenced by his girl friend, the Komsomol Assia, he is disillusioned and prepares to leave the seminary.

The first part of the story, which explains how and why Pavel comes to God and to the idea of serving Him, is significant. The reason is the terrible, senseless death of his father. While trying to save some children from a boat that capsizes in the middle of the river, he is hit by the propeller of the barge hurrying to his aid and drowns.

The senselessness of his father's death at the moment of sacrificing himself for others, and his own heavy sense of guilt because he could not swim and is now alive whereas his father is dead, lead Pavel to question the meaning of life. The explanations which he has been given at school and by his aunt, a librarian, far from satisfying him, have brought him up against new problems.

If a man's end 'can come so quickly, if a man can disappear so completely, then what sense is there in his living?' 'What does one live for?' he asks his aunt. And to her stereotyped propaganda explanations, combined with reproaches that he thinks too much, Pavel replies: 'But, surely, it isn't a bad thing if I think—Pavel hesitated, remained silent and then ended almost apologetically—about the meaning of life?'

In O. Polukhin's novella 'Whirlpool', a girl who loses her mother and goes to live in a remote corner of Russia with relatives who are members of a religious sect, undergoes a complicated process of conversion, but at the end is disillusioned and leaves.

Both stories not only bear witness to the persistence of religious feelings among the young generation in Russia, but also endeavour to analyse them and to explain their emergence.

Perhaps the best reason is given by Dubov in 'The Difficult Test'. His hero Alyosha, also a seeker, meets a Baptist worker who says to him:

'The young don't know what to do with themselves. Their daily bread is assured. But that isn't enough! Having fed the body, man strives to feed the soul, but he finds no spiritual food, and so he wanders in the darkness of crude, sensual pleasures. However, while you can quench your bodily thirst, it is impossible to quench spiritual thirst. And this thirst dries man out, makes him callous and indifferent to others.'

In a restaurant Alyosha encounters Oleg, son of a party member and prominent engineer.

'Listen, do you believe in God?' asked Alyosha.

'In God?' Oleg stared at him. 'What do you think I am, a fool? If you want to know, I don't believe in anything! Everybody pretends and lies. But not me. If you want to know, I alone am honest!'

Oleg is satiated; he has everything. The lies, corruption, fawning and arrogance of the rulers breed in him a genuine nihilism. Perhaps he is right to consider that among his circle he is the most honest. His attitude to communism is in keeping.

'Greenhorn!' he says in a superior way to Alyosha, who mentions communism. 'Are you trying to convert me? You needn't, I know more about communism than you do. They are still constructing it, but I have already reached

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the communist stage—I receive according to my need.'

'Without working?'

'Don't be funny! What do you think I am, a beast of burden to work like a donkey?'

The secret of the classless communist society is also revealed in the words of the Baptist worker:

'This is what I say: all people became equal. What's wrong with that? Living in peace and harmony, everyone having his equal share of wealth and everything. . . . But then they started to single people out. And once you begin making distinctions, it means division and inequality. Some in front, others in the ranks.'

Alyosha learns one important thing from his factory experience which he successfully applies to all spheres of his life:

'Mistakes and cheating could only mean one thing—defective goods. This was true all round. Imperceptibly, he began to apply this difficult test to everything that he and other people said and did. For what else but harm and error could result from deceit, wherever it was practised?'

THE short story 'Butterfly' by the young writer A. Aleksin (*Yunost*, No. 5, 1960), is about a young journalist whom the editor is instructing in the ways of the press.

'We have the right to exaggerate and to highlight the facts . . . it is not a matter of one individual, but of the tens of thousands of our readers who are taught and educated by these facts. It is a question of the problem.'

The story shows up the mechanism of the Soviet press. More important, it reveals the reaction to it of honest people, uncorrupted by lies. The mother of the young journalist is a woman 'who does not know how to write comments in the wall-newspaper' and who, in her own words, is devoid of all capacity for 'political thought and generalisation'. When she hears of the sorrow caused to another family by one of her son's articles, she asks a friend of the family:

'But is it possible . . . is it possible to educate someone by falsehoods?'

The old family friend, head of the institution where the journalist's mother used to work, adds: 'As if there could be any problem in the world which gives one the right to slander one honest man!'

In Gulia's *The Chestnut House* (its lyrical tones are impregnated with the flavour of Abkhazian national life) there are several passages on the theme of truth and falsehood in life and literature. The headmaster of a school in a remote corner of the Caucasus has an interesting discussion with the newly arrived young Russian schoolteacher Natasha. He is particularly worried about the method of teaching literature, which is purely a reflection of the social-political approach to art in general.

'In my university days', he remembers, 'we had a writer among us. Let me call him N. He argued that the important thing was the subject-matter and that it was of no importance how it was written up. I remember that the students attacked him and in the end forced him to admit that form is no less important than content.'

The preponderance of content over form is reflected in the school curriculum—the teachers deal only with the ideological and educational content of literature. 'I cannot imagine how it is possible to divide a work of art in two. It is not made up of separate self-contained parts, it is an indivisible whole.'

Insistence on the ideological and educational role of literature limits, if it does not kill, free thought and feeling. Produced under such pressure from above, Soviet literature lacked genuine lyric poetry and an authentic philosophy.

Gulia's headmaster describes the official Soviet approach to literature as 'arch-sociological', the literature itself as 'troubadour' literature.

In local colour and theme, *The Chestnut House* resembles Simashko's short story 'The Temptation of Fragi' (*Novy Mir*, No. 9, 1960). It is devoted to the 225th anniversary of the birth of the Turkoman poet Makhtumkul Fragi, and tells of his temptation to practise 'the most shameful commerce, the commerce of words', by competing with the tyrannical Khan's court poets. He overcomes this temptation through compassion and a selfless deed in defence of those whom the Khan persecutes. On his way to his master with a poem written in his honour, Fragi comes upon a street procession of boys

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

with their hands cut off. Fear prevents the inhabitants from offering help to the martyred children of the subjugated neighbouring tribe. The poet, who had nearly succumbed to his temptation, conquers his fear and gives a personal example of humanity. From this moment his life changes completely. That night, by the bedside of a delirious boy, the poet understands a great truth:

'Yes, the greatest gift of Allah to man is also his punishment. However low he would like to bend his head, his talent will give him away. The gift of Allah is stronger than the weak man. Therein lies the curse of genius. . . . And, in the clear morning, sitting on the simple white rug beside the handless boy, Fragi thanked Allah with all his heart for his punishment.'

But it is not only political rebellion that motivates Fragi. Spiritual rebellion completes his change of heart, makes him choose the road of social poetry and fight for the unification and liberation of his people. Fragi was a priest. Contravening the social laws, he marries a young warrior from the same enslaved and persecuted tribe to which the handless boys belonged, to a girl who is betrothed to an old man of the sacred ancient family. For the first time in his life the priest and poet understands real love between man and woman, that love which God intended when he created two different sexes.

The tragic fate of the young warrior who is caught and stoned to death, and the resulting tragedy for Fragi himself, forces the priest and poet to discover a new wisdom in life. The first wisdom he believed in was the wisdom of the Ecclesiastes: 'Allah has cursed this earth. And the poet can only sing of the will of fate. . . . Everything in this world is transitory. A grave awaits man, whether he be born a slave or a king.'

The second wisdom was the wisdom of those who know how to arrange their earthly affairs at the cost of their guilty conscience. The third wisdom comes with his resolve to devote his life to his people. It is the wisdom of service, sacrifice, compassion, and self-denial for the sake of others.

The religious conflict in Fragi, who now understands that people have replaced God by an idol, and that the word of the priest means nothing to them, is not completely resolved. Fragi knows that he does not believe in a man-created God, made to cover up the dark powers of evil, but in his own God. The second thing he realises is that it is necessary to rouse people to an active struggle against corruption and violence, humiliation and slavery. Fragi's third and last wisdom is the wisdom of youth: 'He was wise with the mad wisdom of youth, the only high wisdom on earth! It was in those years that he wrote his most beautiful verse.'

IN Tvardovski's poem 'Beyond the distant reaches' (*Novy Mir*, No. 5, 1960), we find the same theme of an absolute tyrant 'poisoned by the devil of power', the same atmosphere of spiritual bondage and court fawning:

. . . When the walls of the Kremlin
Shut off the living man from life
A cruel spirit seemed upon us,
We knew no other name.

A similar picture is painted in V. Ketlinskaya's novel *Otherwise It Is Not Worth Living* (*Znamya*, Nos. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 1960). But it seems not so much a sense of justice and historic truth that motivates Tvardovski and Ketlinskaya, as the desire to excuse their behaviour in the epoch of Stalinism. Tvardovski writes:

Thus he lived and acted on earth
Holding the reins tightly
And the man who in his time did not praise
And worship him—such a one could not
be found!

Accusing one and all of subservience and flattery, of 'the most shameful commerce—the commerce with words', Tvardovski expresses his own repentance; not, however, in order to confess to his readers, but to justify Stalin's deeds and thus regain his own honour:

Perhaps not without purpose the son of
the East
Showed till the end the traits of his
Harsh and cruel
Injustice
And Justice.

That is the very theme of Ketlinskaya's novel. She excuses Stalin's tyrannical cruelty, suspiciousness and gloominess by blaming the 'man

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in the pince-nez', the evil demon looking over Stalin's shoulder, Beriya. So great was the evil influence of Stalin's entourage, the argument runs, that it was not in his power to find out what was really going on.

Neither Tvardovski nor Ketlinskaya mentions the boys with the severed hands, mutilated so that in their physical and spiritual maturity they should not be able to take up the sword against their oppressors. Neither Tvardovski nor Ketlinskaya has overcome 'the temptation of Fragi'—their fear of the past and the present, their weakness for the privileges of court poets. Their life, and that of many other Soviet writers, was based on a rule of conduct contrary to Fragi's, and expressed by Maxim Gorki in his enthusiasm for the gathering storm of the revolution:

The madness of courage—this is the wisdom of life!
The madness of courage—we sing its praise!

THE changes that followed Stalin's death and the Twentieth Soviet CP Congress, the conflict of new forces, are often reflected in Soviet novels, such as Chakovski's *The Roads we choose* (*Znamya*, Nos. 1, 2, 3, 1960), competing at present for the Lenin prize. In it the old generation nurtured under Stalin is faced with catastrophe.

'How is it possible?' asks the manager Kondakov when he learns of Khrushchev's report at the closed session of the 20th Congress. 'How are we going to manage without Stalin? But everything, everything was in his name . . . If there is an end to him, then there is an end to everything, Andrei.'

'What end, what do you mean, Pavel Semyonovich?'

'Don't you see?' shouts Kondakov, 'Don't you understand, boy? Everything rested on him, everything, do you understand that? And now what? Do you think I cannot see where all this is leading to . . . A manager must have something to lean on . . . if you fulfil the plan, you are a hero, if you don't, they'll take it out of you. It was all so simple, don't you understand? And now, what do they want? They expose you to every wind. But I am too old to turn round in all directions, too old! . . . I want to know who is my master . . . He punishes, but he can also pardon.'

This is the psychological reaction of the 'old men' to the demise of their master. Their energy, although undermined and weakened, is directed towards preserving the traditions of Stalinism.

The middle generation, lower down in the party hierarchy, shows a desire to think, to run things, and be a master in its own house. The first secretary of the regional committee of the party, Baulin, instructs the young, loyal communist Arefev in the following way:

'Remember one thing: think! Think all the time! You are not a servant, not an employee, you are the master!'

The third force, probably the most unmanageable and destructive one, is the scepticism and criticism within the party ranks. Gone is the unity which existed under the common tyrant, despite the mutual hatred and contempt in the scramble for a place nearer the throne; the criminal conspiracy against the people is in ruins. Only in virtue of its disappearance can the secretary of the regional committee, Baulin, give such a scathing and fitting description of his party colleague Smirnov:

'Do you know, Arefev, what an "augur" is? They were high priests in ancient Egypt. They deluded the people who believed in them. But when they met each other, they could not refrain from exchanging knowing glances, winking at each other as if to say: we know all about this game. That's what Smirnov is—a Soviet augur'.

In describing a strike of workers engaged on the construction of a tunnel, the class divisions and class hatred between the workers, who are deprived through the management's fault of their wages, and the management which receives thousands for useless work, are clearly brought out. Organised resistance is led by a former prisoner, and the strike is supported by the editor of the local paper who defends the interests of the workers in its columns.

The confusion with which the party and administrative authorities react to active protest is also apparent in 'The Difficult Test', in which young Alyosha openly rebels against rigged promotions, in the long novel *In the*

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Name of the Young (*Oktyabr*, Nos. 7, 8, 1960), by A. Panferov, who died recently, and in novels about peasant life like 'The Rooks have arrived' by A. Andreyev (*Oktyabr*, Nos. 1, 2, 1960).

PANFEROV'S long novel *In the Name of the Young*, the sequel to his *Hesitations*, reflects the mood of the higher party hierarchy. It too is permeated with confusion and anxiety, and even a sincere desire to arrest the process of moral disintegration which is corroding the party ranks. Panferov both tries to show that private property represents a danger for the building of communism, and to offer something of real value as an antidote against the remaining vestiges of capitalism. He describes in great detail the love, marriage, and family life of the first secretary of the regional committee, Morev, an ideal communist, who apparently has found a new approach to all these problems. But it is here that we see all the inadequacy of sheer materialism. Love, marriage, jealousy, friendship are reduced to hackneyed party definitions:

'In Soviet man love is the synthesis of thought and feeling. Soviet man places love higher than everything, more exactly on a level with creative labour. In capitalist society love has gradually turned into prostitution for cash. In Soviet Russia love is love, consisting of two inseparable elements: feeling, and physiology which is subordinated to feeling'.

As if in support of this definition Panferov's hero Nikolai Korablev describes in his diary English love as he observed it in the late evening hours in Hyde Park. Drunkenness, depravity, mental stupor, intrigue and spiritual desolation are typical of that 'high-life' society in which Panferov's characters move. One of the wives of these 'bourgeois-gentilhommes' describes them: 'You've begun to forget. The people raised you to leading positions, and you behave abominably'.

The reaction of this social group to the suicide of a member of the regional committee, who has been driven to drink by an unhappy marriage, is characteristic. His party colleagues are stung by his action into the following remarks:

'Why did he give me such a slap in the face?', 'He has spat in our faces'. 'He has twisted our hands behind our backs'.

None of them remembers the man. Their desire to conceal the suicide's vice—alcoholism—and to arrange for a quiet burial by attempting to suppress the very fact of his suicide, is reminiscent of the circumstances of the death of the writer Alexander Fadeyev.

The affair of the dead man's wife, a famous Soviet artist, with a well-known painter, and in fact the whole picture of Moscow city life, is similar to that described in Davidov's novel *The Love Affair of Engineer Isotov* (*Novy Mir*, Nos. 1, 2, 3, 1960). The only difference is that the hero in Davidov's novel is a representative of the rising class of Soviet technocrats. This class is obviously taking over from the party bureaucracy proper and is distinguished from the latter by its robust health, rough strength, business acumen, and the realisation of its own indispensability. Its literary prototype was Drozdov, the villain in Dudintsev's *Not by Bread Alone*. In *Isotov* the works manager Terekhov is cast in the same mould. The class he represents is not afflicted by 'ideological contortions' and 'romantic aberrations'. He is cynical, single-minded, and limited in his aspirations: a house, a full glass, a wife and a mistress, a leading position in the works gratifying to his ambition and love of power, the application of his strength and knowledge to a concrete job—these suffice for this representative of the strong new forces which aspire to power and leadership in the country. In their typical features, they resemble the business tycoons in capitalist countries.

Among the prose writings of 1960 which deserve special mention, are the memoirs of Ilya Ehrenburg, and the fifth part of Konstantin Paustovski's long narrative *The Story of a Life* ('A move to the South', *Oktyabr*, No. 10, 1960).

Ehrenburg writes a great deal about prerevolutionary Russia, about émigré and Bohemian life in Paris, and about his attitude to art. Paustovski always fills his writing with the sounds and colours of chance meetings, which he uses admirably to convey the wonderful depths of life. Widely different in their spiritual profiles, both are masters of contemporary Russian prose.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Despite the diversity of themes and moods in Soviet literature in 1960, it is possible to discern the leitmotiv which runs through many works and symbolically links the beginning of the year and its end: Dudintsev's 'A New Year's Fable'[2] and Soloukhin's poem 'How to drink Sunlight' (*Literaturnaya Gazeta*, 1960, No. 140). They are even linked in theme:

In you there is a drop of sunlight
(let us suppose, you are a blade of grass).
Give, light up joyfully,
Touch the tree with your flame.
Perhaps it will catch fire
(You may not see this,
Only give your drop,
The golden little spark of your fire),
Everything perishes in this world.
Everything on earth burns out.
Everything turns to ashes.
Only the fire is immortal!

[2] See Prof. Gibian's article, p. 49.

DISSENT

INDIA — Stanley Plastrik reports on his conversations and observations in the cities and villages

ENGLAND — Norman Birnbaum, John P. Roche debate BLP issues; Lewis Coser discusses "Out of Apathy"

CUBA — Edward Friedman, Richard Kraus weigh trends; Daniel M. Friedenberg reviews "Listen Yankee!"

FRANCE — In a letter from Paris, Paul Parisot offers a topical estimate of a "Nation in Agony"

U.S.A. — Michael Walzer, Henry Pachter assess policy problems as President Kennedy takes office

Language and Technology	HERBERT MARCUSE
Nature and Limits of Freedom	DAVID SPITZ
The Addict and the Law	EDWIN M. SCHUR
Thwarting the Young	DAVID SACHS

WINTER, 1961 — 75c

DISSENT — 509 FIFTH AVENUE — NEW YORK 17

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

VOICES OF YOUTH

Notes on Newcomers

Vera Alexandrova

IN both pre-revolutionary and contemporary Russian literature the passing of one decade into the next is associated with certain changes. But the current decade of the sixties seems to have come in smoothly, without any remarkable change. Nevertheless, one would like to note a few new traits. As the second world war is receding further and further into the past and the new generation that was born at the end of the war is now coming out into the world, the differences between those who, say at the age of 17, just got into the last phase of the war and those who never did, are slowly narrowing.

This has happened because, irrespective of whether they did or did not take part in it, war deprived both the older and the younger of their childhood and adolescence. This is well put by the young poet Semyon Sorin in the lyrical poem ' Of time and of Oneself ' (*Yunost*, No. 1, 1960):

Remember how that June the war
Broke in our homes and took away our
Youth?
It never gave it back . . .

But the argument between the young and the old, between ' Fathers and Sons ', is continuing —at times even growing more acute. With mocking sadness Evgeny Yevtushenko depicted this in a short poem, ' The Nihilist ' (*Yunost*, December 1960).

He wore tapered trousers
And read Hemingway—
' You have un-Russian tastes, my friend ',
His father would say gloomily.
He'd grieve all his relations,
Those decent toilers in production,
Constantly arguing with them
Over his peculiar tastes.

For this, the older ones branded him a Nihilist. Later, the Nihilist went off on some expedition to the north and there the young lad's biography came abruptly and ' stupidly ' to an end. He died in saving a comrade's life. The poet reads his diary: '. . . and he was bright and pure '. One thing the poet could not understand —' why was he called a Nihilist? '

The continuing dispute between the older and the post-war generation finds expression in a number of books published last year, particularly in Vadim Kozhevnikov's novel *Get acquainted, Baluyev* (*Znamya*, April–May 1960), in the short story by Nikolai Dubov, ' A Hard Test ' (*Novy Mir*, September 1960), and in the story ' Colleagues ' by the young writer, a doctor by profession, Vasily Aksenov (*Yunost*, June-July 1960).

Judging from the most recent books, the youth of the sixties, as distinct from the fifties, has apparently no wish to be placated by declarations that everything about it ' is something rather special '. More and more, it begins to ponder what it is meant to be, what it is meant to represent. This has been well put by Aksenov, in ' Colleagues ', and by the young critic, Stanislav Rassadin, in an article entitled ' The Sixties ' (*Yunost*, December 1960).

Rassadin's article was prompted by the famous poems by Yaroslav Smelyakov (' Severe Love ')—a tale of adolescents in the first Five-Year Plan, depicting the naïve asceticism of the thirties. Reading such poetry today, the people of the sixties smile and say: ' Our existence, our whole way of life has changed '. ' And yet ', remarks Rassadin, ' we shall never permit ourselves to look down on them, from the height of the sixties '. But it is not so much a case of modern youth's reactions to their predecessors in the thirties as of the older generation who are writing today. Without knowing the youth of today, these writers often model their young contemporaries on the old patterns of the heroes of the first Five-Year Plans. When the ' virgin lands epic ' began a few years ago, writers ' lost their heads ' and ' began to give their characters the typical features of enthusiasts . . . They took them along not in ordinary, but in romanticised heated goods wagons, going along with a brisk

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

wind, the wheels rattling, the scarves fluttering in the breeze . . . the scarves having been borrowed from biographical films. . . .'

Dressed up for this historic masquerade, the young characters in these stories began, even in their outward appearance, to resemble the Komsomol of the first Five-Year Plans. No wonder that the real young people, reading what has been written about them, merely shrug their shoulders in vexation. A few years ago, when Rassadin himself went to Kazakhstan, a young tractor-driver, Edik, chatted to him on the subject. He got hold of a story once, he said —he'd forgotten its title and its author—anyway, 'the story was about our brothers. There is a lad in the book, who gives up his money, gives up his house, sleeps in a tent and goes about in overalls. . . . And at work he cracks one record after another, like sunflower seeds. But if I have nowhere to live I can't do my work properly! And I may look young but I have a wife and two kids. They've got to eat, haven't they? So there you are. No, don't argue, mate, it's just a lot of bragging!'

Rassadin makes no secret of the fact that he does not think much of Edik's arguments: 'All around us there is heroism. And Edik prattles about a house, about money. And yesterday he even managed to quarrel with the accountant'. But soon, seeing how well Edik works, Rassadin realises his mistake. 'Now', writes Rassadin, 'I'm no longer needled by such things. I realise: the fact that Edik feels fenced in by such monkishly austere conduct is a good sign of the times, of times that have changed. And this I did not learn from novels'. So much for the material side of life. 'Even greater changes have taken place in our spiritual life. Indeed, the people of the sixties have acquired a great deal. But don't you think that they have lost that selflessness, that moral purity, that amazing adherence to principle which is so striking in the heroes of "Severe Love"? And anyway, who are these children of the present, on whom the future depends?' The answer to this, in Rassadin's view, can be found in Aksenov's 'Colleagues'. In this story there are three heroes who have just graduated from Medical School—Maximov, Zelenin, and Karpov. When filling in forms they put '1932' in the column marked 'year of birth'. The subject of their disputes and their meditations is best brought out in the conversations between Alyosha Maximov and Sasha Zelenin. Maximov detests high-sounding phrases, he is fed up with 'blabber'. He hates it because it is often 'scoundrels' who go in for 'high falutin' words'. That is why it is better to avoid them and to listen only to the voice of one's conscience. Zelenin does not agree: the youth of today is answerable not only for itself but also for those who at the beginning of the last century joined the struggle for a better life, for all those who perished in the struggle for the triumph of truth. The youth of today 'has to answer both to its contemporaries and especially to future generations'.

Despite all his sympathy for Aksenov and his story, Rassadin feels that with regard to Maximov and his meditations, the author has made it all too easy for himself by fitting them into a 'very artless scheme of things'.

After analysing a few more writings, Rassadin comes to this conclusion: not so very long ago some young people were content with the fact that in the latest books they were portrayed as being full of the joy of life, as being in love with life; there were many long and fascinating roads for them to follow. This is not enough for the youth of today. The most positive thing about recent literature is the fact that 'the majority of good books about contemporary youth are written by the contemporaries of heroes'. 'Who better than they know this "living material",' concludes Rassadin. 'After all, it is they themselves!'

WITH this background sketched in, there emerges with greater clarity the themes and treatment of heroes in the works of young writers. Among these Yuri Kazakov has gained a special place for himself. His work was commended in an article by Konstantin Paustovsky, 'Indisputable and Disputable Thoughts' (*Literaturnaya Gazeta*, 20 May 1959), written in connection with the third All-Union Congress of Writers. Paustovsky is not held in high regard by the literary bosses, but among wide circles of Soviet readers he has the reputation of an independent writer. Part of the article is devoted to a question which perturbs many: 'Have we among our rising generation writers who are

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

talented, progressive, and capable of hard and serious work?' Paustovsky not only answered this in the affirmative but added: 'The older writers might even envy them'. Among this younger generation Paustovsky named in the first place Yuri Kazakov. Kazakov's work, he believes, is distinguished by 'its singular depth and clarity; its truth and the strength of its bonds with the people touch the heart'.

One must not think, however, that the literary path of these new writers is strewn with roses. No sooner had Paustovsky given this high praise to a young writer than it was immediately contested at the Congress by Leonid Sobolev, chairman of the RSFSR Union of Writers. In his speech Sobolev, having quoted Paustovsky's review, hastened to sow doubts as to the critic's impartiality. 'Kazakov is undoubtedly talented', said Sobolev, 'but somehow he does not make the best use of his natural gifts. He has a capacity for acute observation, an inclination to meditation not often encountered in our novels; he has a feeling for language. . . . A young talent that should take the right path. Instead, he writes about vagabonds trying to corrupt a young girl, about brutal and stupid fellows who jilt their brides in the village for the sake of a sports career in the city.' But it was precisely Kazakov's talent which got him invited to the RSFSR Seminar of Young Writers. In the three weeks of his attendance at the Seminar, Kazakov did not submit a single story and only on the last day amazed everyone by reading a short story about young Lermontov seeing the wounded Pushkin being carried away after the duel; what's more, it turned out that he had written the story long before the Seminar. 'That was a wrong and silly thing to do', said Sobolev at the end. Yet this severe judgment does suggest a question: what if the same yardstick were applied to the work of Sobolev, author of the much-publicised novel *Capital Repairs* in the early thirties?

AS with the biographies of most young writers, Yuri Kazakov's biography is not very eventful. He was born in Moscow in 1927 and when he finished school he joined the Gorki Literary Institute, from which he graduated in 1957. But it was while he was still a student that he began to write and be published. In most of Kazakov's stories there breathes an incorruptible, at times sombre, force, and the sense of loneliness. 'Arcturus' (*Moskva*, August 1957) is typical. No one ever quite knew how the blind dog had come to the small northern town. Some said he had been left behind by travelling gypsies. The dog settled in the town. 'He never bothered anyone, never pestered anyone, took no orders from anyone: he was free.' His mother, a thoroughbred Kostroma hunting dog, had probably given birth to him and his brothers and sisters in some secluded spot. When the puppies began to see, it was found that one of them, the hero of this story, had been born blind—his pupils were covered by a thick white film. After she had reared the puppies, the mother lost all interest in them and they went their own ways. The blind dog had a difficult life which hardened his body and soul. He fed on scraps. When the narrator of this story came to the little town, he went to live in the house of the local doctor. Before the war the doctor had a large family—but his two sons were killed in the war, the daughter went to live in Moscow, his wife died. The doctor lived like a recluse. One day, returning from duty, he noticed the animal with a torn cord round his neck. He dragged him home, washed him, fed him, and was about to send him on his way—but the dog would not budge. The doctor thought: 'What use is this dog to me? And what am I to call him?' Looking up at the night sky, he saw one bright star on the horizon, Arcturus. So he called the dog Arcturus—a name to which the animal at once responded. Arcturus was devoted to his master. Waking up long before the doctor, he would sit patiently out in the yard, by the bedroom window, waiting for him to wake up. His blindness gave Arcturus many hard moments. Once he frightened a herd of cows returning to the town. Cows don't like dogs, and they scattered in all directions. The infuriated bull went for Arcturus and almost gored him. It took the herdsman a long time to quieten him down. Arcturus did not whine but his whole being expressed 'pain, vexation and hurt'.

The third and last phase of Arcturus's life came when he was taken into the woods. Here the dormant soul of the hunting dog came to life. His lack of sight was compensated by

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

exceptionally acute hearing—he could hear a whisper miles away. After that first visit Arcturus began to disappear quite frequently, but he always came back. Soon his fame as a hunting dog began to spread beyond the town. Hunters would offer the doctor large sums for Arcturus, but he refused.

One day Arcturus vanished and did not return. The doctor became thin and melancholy. All searches were in vain. The street boys offered to look for Arcturus, but could not find him. Then the narrator left the town but returned about two years later. He happened to be walking in the direction of the wood when on its outskirts he suddenly saw a dog's skeleton by a shrivelled fir-tree. Nearby lay a dog-collar with a rusty clasp. These were the remains of Arcturus. He must have been pierced by a spiky tree branch near the ground.

ALL Kazakov's stories are memorable for their compact plot, the precision and economy of the verbal pattern.* Young people with literary leanings love Kazakov, but critics of the older generation, according to V. Frolov ('Our Day and Age—the Great Achievements of the Artist', *Oktyabr*, X, 1959), 'accuse him of every mortal sin: of decadence, of estheticism, pessimism'. Frolov's observation is illustrated in the 'Open Letter' of People's Artist M. Romanov (*Literaturnaya Gazeta*, 3 September 1959), in which Romanov sharply attacks Kazakov for his story 'The Apostate', published in the July 1959 number of *Oktyabr*.

'Reading your story, I thought—why is talent given to men? And I did not content myself with your implied answer, that talent is an apostate'. Romanov himself makes here an interesting reservation: 'Perhaps to some of the younger ones your story may seem original and new—but to me it recalls debates now forgotten, but widespread among the intelligentsia when I was young, before the 1917 revolution, debates about the mysterious, dark people and its mysterious and incomprehensible soul'. Romanov concludes his letter with the admission that Kazakov's story left him with a 'heavy feeling' and expresses the hope that the young writer will leave the 'artificial world' he has created, will abandon 'the ugly distorted images' and will realise that such a story 'serves not good but evil' for it 'lowers man' and offends his soul, thus breaking with the 'humanistic nature of our art'.

In order to appreciate fully the malicious partiality of the author of this 'Open Letter', one must read Kazakov's story. His hero is Yegor, a buoy-keeper on a big river. He is a braggart and a drunkard and a loafer. He likes to boast to the visiting amateur fisherman whom he puts up for the night. But even this man has a sacred corner in his heart. He has a beautiful voice. And when the spirit of song seizes him, his listeners forget Yegor's 'roughness and stupidity, his drunkenness and his boastings, and they forget the long journey behind them and their fatigue . . . they only hear this lovely voice which rings and soars and bemuses the brain, and all they want is to go on listening, head in hand, eyes closed, not breathing, unable to hold back the sweet tears'. '"Into the Bolshoi with you", they all shout when Yegor has finished. Everyone is happy, in a festive mood.' Yegor's glory is now at its peak, it seems. And only Alenka who loves him knows that this is not yet the full glory, but 'just a quarter of it'. The full glory comes when Yegor, together with Alenka, steps on to the cliff's edge, and, in the purest of tenor voices, sings that old song 'Along the Blue, Blue Sea', with Alenka taking the second voice. 'And they sing—and know only one thing, that at any moment the heart will break, at any moment they will fall dead on the grass—and not even holy water will revive them after such joy, such torture'.

Semyon, the hero of Kazakov's story 'The Night', is not unlike Yegor. Semyon 'dreams of but one thing—to compose something which will convey the night and the campfire by which he lies'. A night like this, thinks Semyon, could be conveyed with the help of violins, English horn, and cello. And then a melody would be born to the sounds of which you could 'fly over the earth, wherever you want to, and below you—all the lakes and rivers and cities, and everywhere it would be quiet and dark'.

Such stories are not however secure against the critics. Thus, the critic V. Bushin, for instance, according to Frolov, tried to prove in his

* Some other short stories by Kazakov are discussed in Prof. Gibian's review, p. 49.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

article 'The Moulds Differ' (*Literatura i Zhizn*, Autumn, 1959), that Kazakov has no talent at all, but is simply 'a young litterateur who has published a couple of dozen stories in which there is a great deal of "literary stuff".' And Frolov wants to 'defend Kazakov against such uninformed criticism'. In his opinion, Kazakov is 'talented and bright'. They can, and should, talk to him 'seriously, without going into raptures, but also without stings'. Kazakov's special gift, according to Frolov, is his ability to write 'looking into the heart'. One cannot demand of a writer, says Frolov with ironical reference to Bushin, that his heroes 'should sing not sad or old songs but, say, gay little ditties from film comedies. And if they don't want the gay little songs, if they want to sing at their fires, and sing something sad and sorrowful—what sort of mould is that?'

THE poet Evgeny Vinokurov has something in common with Yuri Kazakov. The resemblance starts with their age—Vinokurov was born in 1925 in Bryansk, the son of a soldier, and himself served in the last phase of the war. After demobilisation he also entered the Gorki Literary Institute and finished the course in 1951. His first volume of poems, *Military Lyrics*, was published in 1956; in the same year he published his second collection of poems, *Sineva* (Deep Blue), and in addition, in common with other young poets, had his work published in different journals.

Like his contemporaries, Vinokurov devotes many poems to his childhood. He had been thought a difficult child but the first testimony to his political maturity came from the kindergarten! Vinokurov's style resembles Kazakov's in its attention to accurate detail:

Do you know how to make a proper roll?
No? Well, it's quite easy . . .
You take the coat, press it into pleats,
*And roll it, into a horseshoe shape . . .**

His most lyrical poems are marked by this love of detail. In *Sineva* Vinokurov tells how he once happened to be in a dull Belo-Russian village. The thing that struck him most was that all the inhabitants had dark blue eyes. A bare-foot girl at the river burned him with her 'blue-hot coals'. The eyes of the man in the corn-kiln, in his old military overcoat, were of a 'deep, deep blue'. The old woman wandering in the flax fields with the mushroom basket on her arm, 'her ancient eyes full of a blue peace'. The poet noticed five young people by the gate, in animated conversation; the eyes of all five of them 'a blue blaze'.

Of the new poems published in *Literaturnaya Gazeta* (12 January 1960), I would select for special mention: 'They all gave me good advice'. The poet had listened courteously to all his teachers and superiors without entering into argument.

It cost me nothing—
And it makes them glad . . .

but,

The more I listened to my teachers
The more I longed to be just on my own . . .

In the same emotional key is the short poem published in the May 1960 number of *Molodaya Gvardiya.*

We argue sometimes idly, languidly,
Idly, we cede our positions . . .

But this is wrong because

He who persists at all cost in his view,
He is the one who's right . . .

Like Kazakov, Vinokurov has a good many critics. Their tone reveals that they are mostly representatives of the older generation; it is his contemporaries who come to his defence. And this is perhaps the most typical trait of the sixties: the consolidation of the literary forces of youth in spheres of literary endeavour. Rassadin is right when he says in his article: 'Even though the image of the young contemporary in these books is still unfinished, like an incomplete sculpture, even though some features have come out more clearly than others, nevertheless the image is true to nature'.

In his speech on Kazakov at the third Congress of Writers Leonid Sobolev unexpectedly admitted that the disputes about contemporary writings perturbed and irritated some of the older generation because 'they found it difficult to enter into the new life'. The older generation has a rich past; the only capital possessed by the young is the present. And they seem to be drawing the right conclusions.

* Translator's note: This refers to the way Russian soldiers wear their greatcoats, rolled over one shoulder.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Kazakov, Nagibin, Voronin

NEW TRENDS IN THE NOVEL

George Gibian

SLOWLY and undramatically, the Soviet short story has been changing. Several authors are now active who concentrate on the simple events of emotional life, paying no attention to politics, social questions, or the macrocosm of industry and agriculture. Private life has reclaimed part of the ground it lost under Stalin.

Whether lyrical or prosaic in their writing, what these authors have in common is an utter lack of interest in the public side of life and in the large, 'collective' issues. They are concerned with the subjective. They focus their attention on details, on small incidents, ephemeral impressions. A sigh, a smile, an embrace, the smell of snow are more important in these works than acres of Kazakh Virgin Lands or reams of steel production statistics.

This represents an important revival of earlier Russian literary traditions. It is a step back in the direction of Chekhov, Turgenev, and Bunin.

During the four years following Stalin's death, in works like Dudintsev's *Not by Bread Alone* (1956), the stereotypes of approved Soviet fiction were inverted by turning high officials into villains, lonely wolves into heroes. Stalinist literature had become conventionalised. The precepts of socialist-realism, at its narrowest and worst, were easily codified into a set of about six or seven brief formulas. All the dissidents of 1954–57 had to do was to turn them upside down.

At the turn of the century Oscar Wilde and George Bernard Shaw produced paradoxes by reversing the established maxims. The technique which amused and shocked respectable London in 1896 produced consternation in official Moscow in 1956. But Dudintsev and his group of rebels were really still playing the same old game. Theirs was a fictional world in which, as in orthodox socialist realism, some characters were given unqualified moral approval, others reprobation, and in which the basic criterion was still that of greatest usefulness to the 'collective' and 'future generations'. (In *Not by Bread Alone,* for instance, the very concretely measurable goal was the designing and exploiting of the most efficient pipe-making machine.)

It is very different now. Of course it is difficult to avoid over-simplification in generalising about the short story in Russia, as it would be to summarise neatly and exactly the state of the short story in Germany, Great Britain, or the United States. Hundreds of stories are published every year; great variety exists among them. Many stories published today in the USSR, perhaps the majority, are still similar to those of 1946–51: stories of collective farms, agricultural problems, factories, offices, in which reassuringly simple, solvable problems are posed, no disturbing issues are raised, and simplistic social values are reinforced. Yet it is also undeniable that a shift in emphasis has occurred. Stories of another kind can now be found more frequently.

Among the categories which have acquired a new importance, the most significant is that of stories of psychological analysis. Sergey Antonov, Vera Panova, and others write in this vein. But it is in the stories of Yuri Kazakov and Yuri Nagibin that the genre is revealed in its purest and often most perfect form.

Kazakov and Nagibin are not the most widely read writers in Russia. Far from it. But their works are followed with eager attention by those Russians who are especially interested in literature. They are characteristic of something new—of disagreement with the public values of the party. They do not express their dissent in direct polemic. Kazakov and Nagibin are saying 'No' by turning their backs on public themes, ignoring them completely—and cultivating assiduously what they have staked out as their own small garden. Most important of all, they write well. If a London or New York publisher asked me to recommend living Soviet

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

writers whose works, translated into English, could pass scrutiny by literary criteria as severe as those we apply to British or American writing, Kazakov and Nagibin would be those I should name first.

YURI KAZAKOV was born in Moscow in 1927. He studied music, played in an orchestra, and began to publish in 1957. By now he has published a slim handful of stories in the monthly reviews and the collections *Manka* (1958) and *At the Station* (1959).

The central characters of several of his stories are handicapped creatures, men or animals, who have to face life with some defect. It follows that compassion for his unfortunate characters is one of the strongest emotions felt in his stories.

In 'Manka', Kazakov presents a fourteen-year-old orphan, ugly, thin, who delivers the post in a sparsely settled coastal region in the near-Arctic. She has the further misfortune of being in love with the most dashing, handsome, sought-after young man in the district, Perfily, who of course never even notices her, being busy courting the local beauty Lenka.

One day, however, spurned by Lenka, Perfily in a rage rows a skiff out to the traps despite a dangerous storm. Manka, after vainly trying to stop him, goes with him. They barely escape drowning. The boat turns over and is thrown up on a beach. Manka and Perfily go into a hut, dry their clothes, drink vodka. What Manka had been wishing for takes place: Perfily at last notices her as a woman and begins to embrace her. But at this point something unexpected happens to her. She repulses him and walks away. Kazakov does not explain why, nor suggest what will happen later. He leaves open the possibility that the two will meet again. Manka's final state of mind is equivocal. She thinks of what happened as a mixture of horror, joy, and shame.

Her reactions are not presented as rational; they are even difficult to analyse rationally. She yearns for Perfily, yet when he tries to seduce her, she is shocked; afterwards, she feels in part vengeful and indignant, in part happy. That is all. Such is life, Kazakov implies: unpredictable, rich in surprises. The human heart is impetuous, changeable. His delight in relating a story of an intense, passionate heart is unmistakable. To assign moral praise or blame is completely outside his purpose.

SOVIET critics have accused Kazakov of pessimism. It cannot be denied that in several stories he shows a keen awareness of the failure of events to work out in accordance with our wishes. The 'House under the Precipice' is the tale of a young man's discovery of the presence of evil near himself and simultaneously of his acquiescence in doing nothing about it, even when he knows he could and should.

Blokhin is sent from Moscow to work in the library of a small town in order to study the reading habits of the inhabitants and the library's practices. The local hotel is full. Blokhin goes to the House of Culture to ask for help in finding living quarters. He is sent to a lady who rents rooms, and it is in her house that he undergoes his brief initiation into evil. The lady is vulgar and repulsive, but she has a daughter who is beautiful and downtrodden. The young woman is her mother's prisoner. She knows nothing of the world; she eagerly questions Blokhin about life in Moscow. The mother resents her talks with the guest.

The landlady and most of the people on their street are backward Old Believers. Life is suffocating. The landlady tells lies, asks exorbitant rent, refuses normal services. Next morning the young man gives notice and moves away. It is clear to him that he ought to save the young girl from her killing environment; it is equally obvious that she never will be liberated. As he is leaving the house, he thinks of his work: 'To sit in the library, make up catalogues, recommended lists, readers' records . . . And close by a human being is being destroyed, close by there is an entire street of Old Believers. They are certainly readers, too. Practical work! This is where practical work is needed, in these houses!'

The witch-like landlady remains in control of the house; the daughter will continue to languish. The young man, knowing where his true duty lies, does nothing. The only positive value of the story (and its main interest for the

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

reader apart from Kazakov's brilliantly created picture of the dark, frightening world of the landlady's street) is the glimpse caught by Blokhin of the daughter's existence. But the fact that he gained such an insight makes his failure to act even more reprehensible. No wonder critics chide Kazakov for pessimism.

In *Dubliners*, James Joyce illustrated the paralysis at the heart of a modern city. The girl's entrapment in the 'House under the Precipice' is reminiscent of Joyce's 'Eveline'. The pathos of the story, as of others by Kazakov, reminds us also of some of Anton Chekhov's stories.

Love is a frequent subject of those Soviet writers who have turned their attention to the private life of individuals. Kazakov's 'Blue and Green' is the history of the love of Alyosha for Lilya from the moment when they meet on a 'blind double date', through their first kiss and the various stages of their love until the time when she meets someone else, marries the other man, and leaves for the north.

The story is told in Alyosha's words, in an eternal present—with comments and asides which sometimes make sense only at the moment of their happening, not in retrospect; he notices the small details of the world around him, reflects about seemingly insignificant trifles: 'When we walk past posters, I read them carefully. One can read posters backwards, too. They come out as ridiculous sounds'. The narrative is bounded by the mind of Alyosha: what he sees, hears, or thinks at any given moment. There are no unusual or melodramatic events, only little incidents such as millions of lovers have experienced. Yet by showing how everyday reality impinges on Alyosha's apparently naive consciousness, Kazakov succeeds in giving us a remarkably vivid sense of the development of an intense love (with a correspondingly deep sorrow at the end, when he loses her), communicating the lights and shadows as perceived by the simple, receptive heart and senses of Alyosha.

'On the Island' presents a love almost as unhappy in outcome. Zabavin, thirty-five, married, with two children at home, visits a northern island on an official inspection trip. The director of the meterological station is a twenty-six-year-old woman called Gustya. Zabavin has been stirred by the journey to the island and by Gustya's company. He begins talking to her about happiness, love, life, growing old. Both are unusually moved; they go for a walk late at night, and kiss. Their suddenly blossoming, doomed love brings them only sorrow at having to part. They have only one night together: the next day Zabavin has to take a fishing boat back to Arkhangelsk.

When Zabavin leaves, Gustya asks him: 'What is this? Is this happiness?' 'Yes, yes, it is happiness', Zabavin answers bitterly. 'Oh God!' she says with tears in her eyes, and when he is on the boat returning alone to the mainland, Zabavin reflects: 'So this is happiness! So this is love! How strange . . . love'.

From the point of view of official party morality, the story is suspect. It depicts without condemnation the emotional involvement of a man who ought to know better. Zabavin is irresponsible. His sub-Arctic 'brief encounter' leads to nothing. But Kazakov would only laugh at these cavillers. He is not interested in passing judgment. In the tradition of Chekhov, he is not answering questions, only raising them. He is attracted by the particulars of what a man and woman feel during a brief impossible love affair. His sketch aims at presenting the inextricable mingling of love, happiness, bitterness, and pain which Zabavin and Gustya experience.

It is essential for this story to end inconclusively, just as finality is necessary for 'Arcturus'.[1] The dog must die in order to establish the duality of his life—the epic glory and the pitiful blindness. 'On the Island' is the study of a love which, while it is casually entered upon, grows quickly into something far from casual and ephemeral. Kazakov wishes to convey the sense of wonder at the mystery, complexity, ambiguity of life. Not for him the facile optimism with which socialist realism sorts and files its manifestations.

YURI NAGIBIN, born in 1920, studied cinematography. In 1942–43 he was with the political section of the Soviet Army. He was wounded and later became a war correspondent. His first story was published in 1939; since

[1] 'Arcturus', one of Kazakov's most interesting tales, is discussed in Mrs. V. Alexandrova's contribution, p. 44.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

then his stories have been collected in more than half a dozen volumes. In 1956 his two stories. 'Khazar Ornament' and 'Light in the Window', were among those works published in the anthology *Literary Moscow* (volume II), which because of their anti-Stalinist nonconformity aroused much comment.

In the last five years, his sensitive stories have been outstanding among those Soviet literary works which have concentrated on psychological analysis. All over Russia, readers have been discovering Nagibin. His many admirers now look forward to each new story and place high hopes in his future accomplishments.

The themes which interest Nagibin are similar to Kazakov's. He writes frequently about love, usually unhappy love or love seen from an unusual point of view.

In a story which is entitled simply 'Love', Nagibin depicts the pure love of a country boy, Egor, for Nastya. Egor has loved her since the age of nine. He leaves their village to study in the town. Apparently he does not write letters or receive any news from the village, for on his return, years later, he is surprised to learn that Nastya is no longer at home. It becomes clear that she has had a notorious love affair with an important man who then abandoned her. Now corrupt both physically and spiritually, she is working as a dishwasher; her conversation betrays how completely she has lost her innocence and acquired a casual, cynical attitude towards love. She has lived dubiously and learned much about other ways than those of the simple village: 'Oh, Egor, how people live!' she exclaims. 'One wouldn't imagine it in a dream—'. Egor answers her: 'People live seriously and with difficulty'.

In several pages of close observation, Nagibin presents Egor's changing reactions; for reasons he cannot begin to understand, he finds he no longer loves the companion of his childhood years whom he has lost, but this unknown, strange, new Nastya. He asks her to return to him. Nastya makes fun of him, again reveals her deterioration by boasting vulgarly to another girl of Egor's affection, but finally, after several refusals, she joins him.

Like Kazakov, Nagibin avoids the temptation to give facile interpretations of the situation. He shows the full extent of Nastya's flightiness and unreliability. He is detemined not to embellish (*lakirovat*) reality. As in many of his other stories, Nagibin here sees human nature as something complex and baffling; the factors making for weakness, unhappiness, failure of understanding, are numerous and powerful.

'The Rocky Threshold' is a story of the unrequited love of a girl living a life still lonelier than Gustya's in Kazakov's 'On the Island'. A geologist on an expedition to the high mountains facing the Afghan frontier meets Katya, a young woman who is then the sole occupant of an experimental botanical station. By chance he learns from her that at the university she had loved a boy who was irresponsible and weak. After being sent to her remote post, she managed to have him assigned to the same mountain station, but after some months he grew bored and ran away. Katya traced his whereabouts and wrote to him. A letter which the geologist-narrator was asked to bring to Katya is the young man's answer—a refusal ever to return.

The geologist leaves Katya at her lonely post, weeping at night, without hope. Her companions are animals—a puppy, a turtle, a chicken and a pig. 'Perhaps, with these dumb animals, she was deliberating how to continue to live', he thinks on catching a last glimpse of her surrounded by her pets.

The story is not entirely gloomy. Katya is brave; she is trying her best to conceal her sorrow; she is continuing to do her work.

Like Kazakov's stories, Nagibin's treat these unhappy or mixed emotions as worthy of consideration on their own account. His language, however, lacks Kazakov's lyricism and the bold, incongruous images Kazakov sometimes employs ('amber patches of manure on the snow'). His stories are plainer, more restrained.

Many of them are set in a hunting milieu (often in the country of Meshchera). Both young authors are twentieth-century heirs of the tradition of Turgenev's *Notes of a Hunter*, and both write with rare insight of old people. Nagibin's 'The Last Hunt' is an example. A man has grown so old that his wife does not think it safe for him to hunt any longer. She hides his shotguns. But when she sees him weeping, she is so moved that she gives him the

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

guns and he goes out once more. There is a description of the hunt, at the end of which, we are given to understand, the old man will die. He bends over to pick berries, becomes dizzy, hears a buzzing in his ears, and then straightens up and walks far into the woods in a strange mood, full of thoughts of death. 'The earth rocked him, as the cradle had rocked him when he was a child. Granpa (*dedok*) walked on and on towards his unreachable goal'.

It is interesting to note that some Soviet critics have contrasted 'The Last Hunt' with Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*, which is extremely popular in Russia. They find Hemingway's novel pessimistic in outcome (claiming that the American author's old man really fails in his efforts) and consider Nagibin's hero more successful in his last hunt (presumably because he brings down some ducks), and therefore hold the story to be more satisfactory.

A FEW years ago Nagibin wrote a sketch entitled 'In the Streetcar'. Two girls are together in a streetcar. The older one is on her way to join a man with whom she is planning to live, though they do not intend to marry. The younger girl knows of the older one's plans and looks at her friend with a mixture of admiration, awe and some fear for her friend's future. Nothing melodramatic happens—in fact nothing happens at all; the older girl gets off the streetcar, walks to her rendezvous, and the younger continues to look back after her. The incident is quite commonplace. The only action is inner action—the psychological relationship between the two girls, especially the younger one's mixture of concern and attraction.

In 'Pavlik', published in August 1959, the hero is a young man brought up by his widowed mother; he is completely under her thumb. In this classical Freudian situation, the boy seems even to her lacking in mettle and too easy to manipulate. But during the war he grows into a brave soldier and dies a hero's death. Always with an eye to the contradictions of human life, Nagibin shows that although he became an admired hero, his men still called him Pavlik, the diminutive of Paul, as if he were a little boy—as his mother called him.

More recently (January 1960) Nagibin has published one of his best stories yet, called 'A Conversation'. As a result of one courageous action, Strizh, a man who had never before achieved any kind of distinction, is elected by his fellows to the position of game warden. A writer comes from Moscow to hunt in the district. Strizh engages him in conversation, because he feels that as part of his work he ought to know visiting hunters. The Moscow author encourages Strizh to drink too much, has nothing but contempt for him, and is afraid of any 'new impressions' which might interfere with his current novel. Strizh, on the other hand, develops a compulsive need to tell the writer that the most important thing life has taught him is that 'one must have confidence in people'. But he never manages to say this; instead he becomes hopelessly drunk and entangled in quaint anecdotes about local members of a religious sect. The Moscow writer takes Strizh for a village drunkard. Ironically, the man who has learned the importance of trust and wants to convey his experience to another earns only contempt from the novelist.

The conversation, revealing how difficult it is for people to understand and communicate with each other, shows Nagibin's interest in the frustration and self-defeat of a man who wants to say something to another human being, but is instead swept away, knowing all along what is happening but unable to stop it, into saying things further and further removed from what he intends to say. Without the least touch of derision or malice, he presents characters who are far from being rational masters of themselves. He has nothing but sympathy for imperfect and inconsistent humanity; his compassionate understanding is far removed from the brisk, official optimism of Soviet ideology.

STORIES of action and adventure are to be found in almost every issue of the literary periodicals. These are primarily designed to attract the reader's interest through the narration of thrilling events. Many are set in foreign countries and exotic locations, and the Soviet reader who has had a surfeit of sermons must find them a welcome relief from the eternal didacticism of Soviet life. Korablinov's 'Secret Shelter of the Forests' is an adventure story of guerrilla warfare against the Germans. Leonid

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Pervomaysky's 'Coffee Budapest Style' describes how a Hungarian Communist who fled to the USSR after the failure of Bela Kun's revolution and became a Soviet soldier searches for his mother after the Russian occupation of Budapest. Efremov's 'Afaneor, The Daughter of Akharkhellen', a tale of a French archaeological expedition to the Sahara, combines the pleasures of exoticism with anti-colonial and anti-nuclear-testing tirades. Metter's 'Murat' is a competent and sensitive thriller tracing the career of a Rin-Tin-Tin-like police dog.

A third category of stories which have provoked much comment in Russia are those which raise ethical-social problems and then suggest solutions which run counter to official Soviet canons of behaviour. Sergey Voronin has called attention to himself with two such stories. In 'The Blue Danube', he tells of the growth of enmity between two men which leads one of them, Ivan, to break the jaw of Nikolay. He is sentenced to a year and a half in prison. On being released, he goes to visit Nikolay, who, fearing an attack, stabs Ivan with a butcher's knife. Nikolay is sent to prison in his turn, leaving wife and children behind.

Voronin presents the growing rivalry between the men as something irrational over which they have little control. It is as if fate had determined to bring about their downfall. Ivan 'does not understand whence such enmity arose between them and why it should exist in people'. The incidents marking the growth of hatred between two men who formerly were good friends, are presented through the eyes of both; to each of them it is the other who seems guilty and he himself innocent, more sinned against than sinning. The reader may well wonder where the guilt lies. Who is to blame—not men, but circumstance, fate, some ineradicable evil drive in human nature?

In 'A Return Home' Voronin raises a still more ticklish question. A Soviet soldier returns to his native village from German captivity. There he finds Vasily, living happily with his wife and children. Yet he remembers that during the war he saw someone who looked very much like Vasily serving the Germans as a guard over Russian prisoners of war. He speaks to Vasily, who eventually admits it had been he and pleads with Ivan not to denounce him. 'I wanted so badly to live', he explains, and presents a moving case for compassion and understanding for those who when faced with death weakened, betrayed their country, joined the Germans, and later succeeded in rejoining the Russian side and keeping their treason secret.

Ivan must decide whether to ruin Vasily and his family. He leaves the village without denouncing him. 'The war has been over for so many years, and it is still going on in our life. I cannot make it up with Vasily', Ivan reflects. 'He seems both pitiful and alien to me'.

This heterodox and compassionate (although uncondoning) attitude towards a wartime traitor outraged many readers.

Formally, one of the most interesting stories of recent years is Vladimir Dudintsev's 'New Year's Tale', in the January 1960 issue of *New World*.

The fact that the story may be read as a criticism of certain features of the Soviet system is not what gives it its importance. Between 1954 and 1957, and to a lesser degree since, several Soviet authors attacked various features of Soviet life. What is remarkable about Dudintsev's story is not what he says but how he tries to say it. I say tries, for I do not think he succeeds completely. But the effort itself is very significant. The other writers did not abandon realism as a literary method; there is no sign that they have read Kafka or Proust or Joyce. Even the Russian prose symbolists and experimentalists—Andrey Bely, Boris Pilnyak—might never have existed for all the traces of their influence on Soviet literature published in the period of the thaw.[2]

Dudintsev's 'New Year Tale' is the first full-blown, non-realistic story to be published within Soviet Russia in recent years. Set in a strange world one half of which is always in darkness, it uses symbolism and allegory, and mixes fantasy and reality; the reader cannot doubt that this is a parable. The hero—a

[2] Non-realistic works of fiction and poetry, on the other hand, circulate in typescript and in mimeographed editions among the Soviet university and literary intelligentsia. The story which was smuggled abroad and published in the West under the title *The Trial Begins* (by Abram Tertz, pseud.) is an example of such 'literature for the drawer'.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

scientist—is working on the problem of condensing the sun's rays in order to produce a source of energy for the unfortunate inhabitants of the eternally dark half of the world: a utopian, non-realistic undertaking. The story reads in part as if its author were a very talented undergraduate who had just read for the first time and been strongly impressed by Kafka's *Castle*, Shirley Jackson's 'Lottery', and Gibran's 'Prophet'. The mysterious owl which hovers around is a little too insistent as a piece of stage property; the *Doppelganger* relationship between the hero and his chief-of-bandits predecessor is equally mysterious, but less obtrusive and irritating.

The major themes of the story (the nature of time; the individual search for self-fulfilment and a rich life; the importance of love to the individual) are not those which official Soviet ideology encourages writers to concentrate on. Other features, however, such as the successful accomplishment of the hero's mission, the end of his illness, the disappearance of the owl, the striving to help the under-privileged in the dark world, can be read as conforming to hallowed party doctrine. But the style sets the story apart from all other recent Soviet writing. Here before us is the major absentee of published Soviet literature of the past seven years: formal experiment, literary innovation. For all its hybrid rawness, Dudintsev's story is a landmark.

It remains to be seen whether the next few years will bring successors or whether the 'New Year's Tale' will remain an isolated monument. If fantasy, allegory, symbol, have indeed returned to Russian literature and retain a permanent place there, permitted to appear in print, then we are witnessing a very important departure in Soviet cultural life.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

MULTINATIONAL LITERATURE AND ITS PROBLEMS

George S. N. Luckyj

SOVIET literature is, by Soviet definition, multinational. This attribute is always regarded as something positive, indeed as an achievement of the Soviet regime, unparalleled in history. The multinational Soviet literature, it is claimed, is the direct result of the happy solution of the nationality problem in the USSR and of the 'unbroken friendship of the Soviet peoples'. Here at the outset one runs into difficulties with the definitions and *a priori* assumptions which underlie Soviet thinking. There are still different nationalities in the Soviet Union, but there is, according to the official version, only one Soviet people and, by the same token, one Soviet literature. To be sure, it consists of many national literatures, but since all of them now develop according to the formula 'socialist in content and national in form', there is a great deal more that unites than divides them. Hence the unity (*yedinstvo*) of Soviet literature (or literatures) is taken for granted.

The history of national literatures in the USSR reveals that the road to 'multinational unity' has led over many serious obstacles; but today, when the goal seems to be in sight, grave doubts exist as to the course taken. These doubts exist not so much in the councils of the Communist Party, as in the minds of the non-Russian writers and literati to whom the 'multinational' cloak protecting the various cultures in the USSR appears to be of plain Russian cloth. The inordinately lengthy and at times acrimonious discussions on the subject of Soviet multinational literature recently appearing in Soviet journals and in the Academy of Sciences reports are but a few of the signs of renewed preoccupation with an old topic. It is old in the sense that the first formulation of the role of national, non-Russian literatures in the Soviet state was provided by Lenin. Underlying his well-known theory of the self-determination of nations was the acceptance of the right to independent cultural development of the non-Russian nationalities. Yet, just as Lenin's proclamation of political self-determination turned out to be but a tactical weapon against the old order, so also his concept of national culture was tinged with utilitarianism, however well-disguised by Marxian terminology. Lenin wrote:

> There are two nations in every contemporary nation. There are two national cultures in every national culture. There is the Great Russian culture of a Purishkevich, a Guchkov, or a Struve, but there is also another Russian culture, that of Chernyshevsky or Plekhanov. Two such cultures also exist among the Ukrainians, as well as in Germany, France, England, etc. In each national culture there are elements of democratic and socialist culture. . . . Following the slogan 'for an international culture of democracy' we take from every national culture only its democratic and socialist elements; we take them in opposition to the bourgeois culture, to the bourgeois nationalism of every nation.[1]

This strictly pragmatic and political concept of national culture became the corner-stone of the Leninist doctrine. It should, therefore, always be remembered that for Lenin a national culture was politically useful in the achievement of the socialist revolution—a means to an end. Following Marx's belief in the eventual establishment of an international communist society, Lenin also hoped that when such a society was created its culture and literature would be international rather than national. The process of fusing and transforming the national cultures into one international culture would, according to Lenin, be a very long one. He wrote that 'national differences will remain for a very long time after the realisation of the dictatorship of the proletariat on a world scale'.[2]

Whatever hopes in the completely independent literary development of the Soviet

[1] Lenin, *Sochineniya* (3rd ed.), XVII, 143.
[2] Ibid. XXV, 229.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

nationalities might have existed in the post-revolutionary days, these were totally unjustified in the light of Lenin's and, later, Stalin's pronouncements. Even less reason for optimism was afforded by the fact that the leadership of the Bolshevik party was always predominantly in the hands of the Russians, for whom, traditionally, the concept of Russia and Russian culture embraced non-Russian elements and often involved an attempt to absorb these elements into Russia. Yet hopes for an unfettered growth of national cultures and literatures in the USSR were high and stimulated many new trends. The Bolshevik reversal of the tsarist policy of russification, the granting of freedom to the non-Russian languages, the introduction of the national languages into official use, could not but add great impetus to the movements for national literary revival. These movements became apparent among the Ukrainians, the Belorussians, the Georgians, the Armenians and the numerous peoples of Soviet Central Asia. The 1920s was a period of remarkable progress in the non-Russian republics. Unfolding in the relatively liberal climate of the NEP, these cultural tendencies owed little to Russian influence and were nourished by national traditions and aspirations long repressed by tsarism. At times these new trends, whether represented by the older intelligentsia or by the new 'proletarian' writers, were hostile to Russia,[3] without ceasing to be internationalist.

THE Communist Party, although committed to support cultural self-determination, viewed these developments with grave apprehension. Did not Lenin himself, while promising freedom to the nationalities, express the strong belief that they would voluntarily stay in union with Russia?[4] Realising the danger, Stalin devised a formula which, at least for the Communist Party, provided a clear guide to the development of national literatures. This was the theory of literature as 'socialist in content and national in form', first fully explained by Stalin in 1925. Speaking on a subject which, after thirty-five years, is still topical—'the political tasks of the university of the peoples of the East'—Stalin declared:

> How is the building of national culture, the development of schools and courses in the native languages, and the training of cadres from the local people, to be reconciled with the building of socialism, with the building of proletarian culture? Is there not an irreconcilable contradiction here? Of course not. We are building proletarian culture. That is absolutely true. But it is also true that proletarian culture, which is socialist in content, assumes different forms and modes of expression among the different peoples who are drawn into the building of socialism, depending on differences in language, manner of life, and so forth. Proletarian in content, national in form, such is the universal culture towards which socialism is proceeding.[5]

In 1925 such a pronouncement was of little practical significance. NEP was in full swing, Stalin was not yet in full control of the party, which in the same year made concessions to the literary 'fellow-travellers' and admitted that the time was not yet ripe for a party monopoly in literature. Five years later, however, at the Sixteenth Congress of the party, when Stalin reiterated the slogan of Soviet literatures as 'socialist in content and national in form', the situation had changed radically. The Soviet Union was in the midst of the first Five-Year Plan, Stalin was the undisputed leader of the party, and the national literatures were being purged of 'bourgeois nationalists'.

This is not the place to relate in detail the losses which the non-Russian literatures suffered during the 1930s. Those accounts which have appeared of the Ukrainian and Belorussian literary purges[6] have proved conservative in their estimates of the losses which these literatures suffered during the era of terror. Thus, the present author's list of 113 Ukrainian writers and literary critics liquidated during the 1930s has been extended to twice that length by recent Soviet revelations during the rehabilitation (mostly posthumous) of writers who 'by force of circumstances beyond their control left the

[3] Cf. Mykola Khvylovy, *Stories from the Ukraine* (New York, 1960).
[4] Lenin, XX, 534–35.
[5] Stalin, *Works*, VII, 140.
[6] Cf. George S. N. Luckyj, *Literary Politics in the Soviet Ukraine, 1917–1934* (New York, 1956); Anthony Adamovich, *Opposition to Sovietization in Belorussian Literature (1917–1957)* (New York, 1958).

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

literary career at the half-way mark'.[7] Some of the non-Russian literatures have never completely recovered from these ravages. Not only did they lose hundreds of talented writers and critics, but those writers who survived had to forsake their earlier credos and styles and conform to the dogma of 'socialist-realism' which, since 1934, has ruled supreme. It is difficult to know which had more disastrous results: the wholesale destruction of literary élites, or the acceptance of party controls by the 're-educated' remnants. It is often forgotten that of those liquidated, only a minority belonged to the fellow-traveller and non-proletarian groups; most were staunchly proletarian and even pro-communist, though tinged with nationalism. 'Bourgeois nationalism' as such was little known to the writers who perished as its alleged adherents. While it is true that during the 1930s Russian writers were also subjected to severe persecution, this was not conducted in an attempt to eradicate Russian chauvinism (which, incidentally, Lenin believed to be as pernicious as bourgeois nationalism) and was mild in comparison with the decimation of the non-Russian writers. The creation, in 1934, of the Soviet Writers' Union deprived the national literatures of the USSR of any possibility of following their own paths and put them under the strict control of the Union. In that body the non-Russian writers had no real power. Although, nominally, they formed separate branches of the Writers' Union in the individual republics, they had very little say in the counsels of the executive of the Union, where they were outnumbered by the Russians. The Russian writers, on the other hand, had, until 1957, no separate republican branch, but had an overwhelming majority on the Union's executive and played a decisive part in the implementation of the literary policy laid down by the party.

The formula of national literature as 'socialist in content and national in form' must be seen therefore as a smokescreen for the ruthless centralisation and standardisation of culture and literature according to Russian models. The facts, confirmed after 1956 by Soviet admissions, show that at the very time Stalin was telling the sixteenth CPSU congress how the party 'helped and promoted the development of the national cultures', a crushing blow was being dealt to the non-Russian literatures, though neither the writers nor their works could be labelled 'bourgeois nationalist'. It is clear that to those who decided that purges were necessary, the vague and specious formula was an instrument for a new policy which was to bar any further independent and anti-Russian tendencies among the national literatures.

A GREAT deal of ink has been spilled by Soviet literary critics and theoreticians on analysing and defining 'socialist content' and 'national form' and the 'dialectical unity' between them. To Marxist and non-Marxist aestheticians alike, such a separation of content and form would appear artificial, although for quite different reasons. Both would tend to look at a work of art as having content and form without necessarily determining where one ends and the other begins. To the non-Marxist, such a crass bisection into content and form is unthinkable; to a Marxist, on the other hand, it goes without saying that 'form is determined by content'.[8] Starting from the premiss that 'every national literature is a concretely class, a concretely historical category', the Soviet theorist logically concludes that—

> it is no longer possible to talk of any unique national form since it does not exist. In reality there exists a literary form in different classes of a given people, which represents the dialectical unity with the content of the literature of this class or this people. . . . Therefore we should speak not in general about Russian, Belorussian, or Ukrainian national literature and national form, but of Russian aristocratic, bourgeois, or proletarian literature. . . . Similarly, we distinguish from each other the national proletarian literatures—according to their national forms. But here the specific form of, let us say, Russian proletarian literature, in contrast to the proletarian literature of the Ukrainians, Belorussians, Jews . . . or to the proletarian literatures of the Turkic peoples, is determined by the characteristics

[7] A. I. Kostenko, 'Na pershomu etapi ukrayinskoyi radyanskoyi poeziyi', *Iz poeziyi 20-kh rokiv* (Kiev, 1959), p. 12.

[8] I. Nusinov, 'Natsionalnaya literatura', *Literaturnaya entsiklopediya*, VII, 635.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> of the entire history of the struggle of the Russian proletariat against its oppressors, in distinction to those specific historical conditions which dictated the struggle of the workers of the other peoples to overthrow the power of the landlords and bourgeoisie and who are now struggling to build socialism.[9]

This class concept of national literature and national form harks back to Lenin's pragmatic distinction between 'democratic' and 'reactionary' cultures within a culture. The theory was not applied consistently, for Lenin, while giving preference to the 'democratic' culture of a given nation, also believed in utilising and adapting the old, bourgeois literature to the needs of the proletariat.

After Lenin's death this policy was abandoned. The Soviet nationalities were declared by Stalin to be 'socialist nations' already weaned, despite the inequality of their historical development, from their 'bourgeois past' and ready to enter, all together, the era of socialism and hence the era of 'socialist-realism'. To understand the literary situation in the 1930s it is necessary to know not so much current official theories as their implications in actual literary politics. In the entire elaboration of the theory of national literatures as socialist in content and national in form, one question remains unanswered: Who is to define what, in content and in form, is permissible at any given time, what accurately reflects the given people's past 'struggle against their oppressors' and their present attempt to 'build socialism'? The decision, we must conclude, was never up to the writers, but up to the Party Central Committee, which openly claimed and exercised this authority, though not with any degree of consistency. How the official standards changed may be seen by comparing the national literatures during the second world war with the post-war period.

THE second world war brought a considerable relaxation of party controls over literature; this was reflected in the national literatures to the extent that nationalism was allowed to appear in both the content and the form of literary works. The reason may be sought, not in any radical reversal of Soviet cultural policy, but in the temporary concessions to the national and patriotic feelings of Russians and non-Russians alike, and by the desire to inspire greater resistance to the German invaders. Historical themes and heroes were permitted to re-enter the novels and plays of Ukrainian and Belorussian writers, to rekindle love of the fatherland, not so much the socialist as the traditional-bourgeois one.

Efforts were also made to foster the theme of the 'indestructible friendship of Soviet peoples', to counteract any possible centrifugal tendencies. The magazine *Druzhba narodov* (Friendship of Peoples), started in 1939, stressed that the peoples of the USSR were attracted by the cultural riches of the Russian people, and made it clear that the amity of the Soviet nationalities was to be coupled at all times with a veneration for Russian culture. This magazine marks an important landmark on the road to multinationalism. Similar ventures had been known before 1939 (especially *Sovetskaya strana* and *Tvorchestvo narodov SSSR*, sponsored by Gorky), but *Druzhba narodov*, published in Russian, was to be, and still is today, the experimental melting pot of Soviet literatures. Apart from translating the finest examples of socialist-realist writing from all the republics, it provided a forum for the discussion and formulation of the theory of multinationalism on the one hand, and of national form and socialist content on the other.

In the drive for ideological literary unity Gorky played an important, if somewhat ambivalent, role. During his lifetime he often expressed a nationalistic pan-Russian attitude (cf. his letter to the Ukrainian writer Slisarenko questioning the need for translating his own works into Ukrainian), tempered with some concern to make good the injustices which the non-Russian nationalities had suffered before 1917. Gorky's true sentiments on this subject are best revealed in a letter he wrote to A. S. Shcherbakov in November 1934, in connection with the preparation of multinational literary almanacs:

> The main purpose of the almanacs is to unite all national literatures into one—pan-union! Further beyond this union there is an outline of the merger of all races into one, not only ideologically, but also physiologically, by

[9] Ibid. 638.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

means of the constant intermixing of persons. I speak precisely of a merger—not swallowing up, not of a physical but of a biochemical conglomerate, which will then create a new culture. . . . It has been stated that in principle 'the almanac will print only new works by contemporary writers'. But in the past the idiocy of autocracy and bourgeois politics inflicted many heavy injuries on the national minorities, the pain of which is still felt, and the church has taught the illiterate and semiliterate people to treat those of a different faith as second- and third-class people. National insults have not disappeared, nor has the haughty and disdainful attitude of Russians to non-Russians disappeared. . . .

I believe that it is unnecessary to keep silent about the insults of the past, and we would gain a great deal in the eyes of readers from the national minorities if, in the almanacs, our writers were to publish brief, well-written studies based on the material of the tragic conquest of the Caucasus, the construction of the Trans-Caspian railway, Skobelev's expeditions into Akhal-Teke, the facts about the forced baptism of the Kazan Tatars, their participation, together with the Bashkirs, in the rebellion of Pugachev, the national movement of the Volga Mordvinians in the 40s, the pillaging of the Siberian tribes, etc. The risk of falling into a tone of repentance is nonexistent, since the proletariat is not responsible for the actions of tsars and merchants.[10]

Gorky's advice about exposing pre-1917 Russian imperialism and exploitation was never taken, but his hope for a merger of Soviet cultures and peoples was brought a little closer to fulfilment. In his speech at the first Congress of Soviet Writers in 1934, Gorky glorified 'multinational Soviet literature', but he reserved for national literatures the right to 'different creative devices and aspirations'.[11] Ironically enough, after his death in 1936, the Soviet authorities created a cult of Gorky in the literatures of the non-Russian peoples of the USSR, emphasising *ad nauseam* their indebtedness to the Russian writer and to Russian literature in general. Startsev's bibliographical guide to the literatures of the peoples of the USSR [12] lists, for the period 1940–54, over 50 books and 400 articles, in Russian alone, devoted entirely to the 'friendship of Soviet literatures'; in most of them Gorky figures prominently.

During the second world war many novels, short stories, and poems were written specifically for the purpose of describing and reinforcing the friendship of Soviet peoples. One of them, possessing literary and not only propaganda value, is the short novel *Vzyatie Velikoshumska* (translated into English as *Chariot of Wrath*) by the well-known Russian novelist Leonid Leonov, whose characters, drawn from several nationalities, 'were meant to be representative of the basic unity of Russia'.[13] Leonov, in this and other novels, is, in the words of a Soviet critic, 'interested, above all, in the Russianness of the Soviet man',[14] a preoccupation which, to many non-Russian writers interested in their own national characteristics, proved to be perilous.

STALIN'S victory toast to the 'Russian people—the most prominent nation of all nations in the Soviet Union', proposed in 1945, was not a good augury to the non-Russian writers. Many who, during the war, were encouraged to write patriotic poems and historical plays, have since been declared 'bourgeois nationalists'. Zhdanov's pronouncement in 1946, reiterating the principle of *partiinost* in literature and denouncing apolitical, cosmopolitan, and bourgeois nationalist writers, had serious repercussions in nearly all the republics, beginning with the Ukrainian and ending with the Turkmenian, everywhere uncovering nationalist deviations. Known for his policy of russification in the Ukraine, Khrushchev, speaking to the Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian SSR in 1948, declared that 'to be friends with the great Russian people means to march in the first ranks of the most progressive movement of peoples'. There followed outpourings of gratitude by hundreds of non-Russian writers to the Russians, whose cultural leadership and

[10] *Istoricheskii arkhiv*, 1960, V, p. 15.
[11] M. Gorky, *Sobranie sochinenii* (Moscow, 1953), XXVII, 296.
[12] I. I. Startsev, *Khudozhestvennaya literatura narodov SSSR; 1934–1954* (Moscow, 1957).
[13] Marc Slonim, *Modern Russian Literature from Chekhov to the Present* (New York, 1953), p. 329.
[14] B. Bursov, *Zvezda*, 1959, 8, p. 202.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

superiority were extolled with unparalleled obsequiousness. The campaign, in which the slogan of 'elder Russian brother' was frequently used, could be regarded as being up to a point successful; this could be seen later, when the Stalinist controls were considerably relaxed after 1953.

In comparison with Russia, where Stalin's death precipitated waves of unrest in literature, described as the 'thaw' or even as an 'interval of freedom', the ferment in the non-Russian literatures was mild. Some calls for greater creative freedom were heard, but these were more timid than those of Ehrenburg or of the contributors to *Literaturnaya Moskva,* and usually echoed earlier Russian protests. In one respect especially did the thaw affect national literatures, awakening memories and stirring doubts as to the success of the 'friendship of peoples'. This was the partial rehabilitation of writers who had perished during the era of Stalin's 'cult of personality'. In Russia, rehabilitation affected only a small number of writers and was not granted to all (e.g. Lunts, Pilnyak, Zamyatin). In the non-Russian literatures, where the purges had been much more severe, a larger number of writers was reinstated (mostly posthumously) but, on the other hand, more of them were left condemned. Moreover, their 'sins' were often different from those of the Russians, and absolution, which could not be granted without revealing the sin, no matter how euphemistically disguised, had a different effect.

It is difficult to know the principles which were applied in the rehabilitation of writers. Coming as a result of the decisions of the Twentieth Party Congress, rehabilitation was intended, in the first place, to reinstate those communist or pro-communist writers in the USSR who had been unjustly condemned and whose works were banned during the Stalin era. However, it is interesting to note that among those rehabilitated were some non-communist or even anti-communist writers, while several communist writers who perished in the 1930's were left on the index. In the national republics rehabilitation proceeded by fits and starts, perhaps because no clear agreement could be reached as to who should be included. There is reason to believe that in each of the republics forces were at work which wished for a more sweeping rehabilitation, not only of Soviet writers but of the pre-Soviet ones too, and that these forces were opposed by the executives of the republican Writers' Unions, which were in favour of gradual and slow reinstatements. Considering the brief period in which rehabilitation took place (February 1956–May 1957), it is noteworthy that several hundred writers and literary critics were readmitted to literature. Some were reinstated before 1956 and a few after 1958; of those whose works have been republished and whose names again appear in Soviet bibliographies, the list of writers who died between 1934 and 1942 is long indeed (71 in Ukrainian literature alone).

The effect of these disclosures on literary life, and especially on the younger generation of writers, must have been profound. The official explanation, that they perished as the result of the 'cult of personality', was totally inadequate. The hypocrisy with which the prefaces to new editions of their works have been composed, mentioning only in passing the 'old fighters, whose names were unjustly forgotten, rejoining the ranks', added insult to injury. Finally, the rehabilitation of writers was not complete; in most cases only a few works by a writer were republished and only in very few instances was there a full and genuine reappraisal of his work.

The fact that, on Khrushchev's orders, rehabilitation was suddenly stopped in 1957, suggests the possibly disturbing effect it had on the national literatures. The effect, to be sure, cannot be accurately measured, since its manifestation was mute, but the revelation of the losses literature suffered at the hands of the NKVD, must have reinforced doubts about the party's wisdom in guiding literature.

THE thaw provided fresh stimulus for the re-examination of the theory of national literature as socialist in content and national in form. In almost every issue of the monthly *Druzhba narodov* there was some discussion of this formula. But not until January 1957 did discussion become controversy. The spark was provided by A. Bocharov, who questioned the

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

very foundation of this theory.[15] According to his argument, to describe Soviet culture as socialist in content and national in form is correct only with reference to the 'principles of Soviet nationality policy'. However, he continues, this thesis has been

> mechanically transferred to the phenomena of literature and art and has recently come to be regarded as an all-embracing characterisation of our culture, our art, as an expression of their specific merits, as an aesthetic category. . . . Is it not time to pause and ask how scientific and hence how true is this formula in the role of an aesthetic category? Let us free ourselves from the cult of this magic phrase, let us attempt to analyse what it means.

Bocharov then proceeds to show the absurdity of the division between content, which is supposed to express socialist ideology, and form—the manifestation of a national language and distinctiveness (*svoeobrazie*). He comments plainly that 'form and distinctiveness are different things; the manifestation of a way of life and customs is that aspect of literature which ordinary readers usually regard as content'. All attempts, therefore, to extract and to define national form as separate from content are, in his opinion, doomed, for 'what is customarily called form is like moisture in the soil; you don't see it if it is there, only when it disappears does the soil become arid and sterile. Just as it is impossible to separate moisture from the soil, so it is impossible to divide national content and form'. Finally, Bocharov condemns the preoccupation with national form of the non-Russian literatures and the habit of always comparing these literatures to the Russian. 'There are no works on contemporary Russian national form. . . . It is obvious that Russian literature, as the most developed one, is regarded at times as the measure of the "uniform socialist content" and of the future "socialist form", and that literary historians try to assess the national form of other literatures only by distinguishing it from the Russian.'

Coming, characteristically enough, from a Russian, this article raised a real storm. It was roundly condemned by most opponents (among them the Georgian Lomidze, the Ukrainian Novychenko, and the Latvian Kraulin), but it was still sending out ripples of discontent, despite the appearance of Lomidze's *Yedinstvo i mnogoobrazie* (Unity and Diversity), written late in 1956 and published in 1957, and now regarded as a standard work on the subject. Since the author now holds an important position as head of the department of the literatures of the USSR at the Gorky Institute of World Literature, his views cannot be ignored.

Lomidze acknowledges that 'some distinguished representatives of national culture, having served their country well, were slandered and placed in the category of "enemies of the people". Such a fate befell the popular Ukrainian playwright and novelist I. Mikitenko, the prominent Armenian poet E. Charents, the Tatar writer G. Ibragimov, the Georgian writers M. Dzhavakhishvili, T. Tabidze, P. Yashvili, the Latvians L. Laitsen, V. Knorin and others. In this way the cultural and national heritage of these peoples was being artistically impoverished, and books of considerable aesthetic merit were withdrawn from circulation.'[16] He reassures his readers that no such violations are likely to occur in the future because the party is following the Leninist principle of allowing the national literatures to develop as socialist in content and national in form. The latter, according to Lomidze, implies much more than language; it reflects the distinctiveness of a people and their national character, but these, in turn, have to correspond to the real interests of the people and, in a socialist society, show not so much the differences between the various nationalities as their common features, developed in the struggle which unites all the workers of the Soviet Union. What the real interests of the people are is plainly determined by the party; hence Lomidze maintains that under socialism the national character of the Soviet peoples has radically changed (sometimes, as in the case of the Bashkirs, propelling them from a semi-nomadic to a modern society), and the interests of these new socialist nations require that more attention be paid in

[15] A. Bocharov, 'K voprosu o natsionalnoi spetsifike literatury', *Druzhba narodov*, 1957, I.

[16] Georgi Lomidze, *Yedinstvo i mnogoobrazie* (Moscow, 1957), p. 14.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

their literatures to contemporary themes than to past traditions.[17]

None of this adds much to the earlier Soviet definition of national form; it is based on *a priori* assumptions as, for instance, that Soviet nationalities are guaranteed the right of national self-expression while in the West the national characteristics of a culture disappear under the pressure of cosmopolitanism. Still, Lomidze's book contains some new ideas, and despite its bias is, on the whole, free from a blind veneration for Russia. In fact, Lomidze makes this unusual admission (p. 280):

> The names of Gorky and Mayakovsky have been canonised and made icon-like. It is difficult to find a single study or article in which the influence of their works on the development of national literatures is not mentioned. . . . Is it not time to stop chewing the accepted truths? Is it not time to approach serious problems more seriously and thoroughly? All one hears is [their] influence and influence!

THE winds of doctrine blew colder after Khrushchev's speech 'For a Closer Alliance of Literature and Art with the Life of the People' in May 1957, and put an end to the thaw. In his book, *The Multinational Soviet State; Its Characteristics and Paths of Development*,[18] published in 1958, I. Tsameryan proclaimed that the national character of 'socialist nations' has come to reflect the new, socialist conditions of their lives and shows their 'spiritual drawing together'. 'The characteristic feature of this process', he continues, 'is the tendency of approximation (as yet not merger) of the national forms of the culture of socialist nations, in contrast to the process of alienation of nations from each other which takes place in a national bourgeois culture'. 'The cultural achievements', he concludes, 'of each nation of our Fatherland are the property of all nations and represent a contribution to the common and unified socialist culture of the Soviet people'.[19]

In a special article, *Pravda* (29 September 1958) declared party policy in the field of multinational Soviet literature to be a complete success and called Soviet writers the missionaries of socialist culture abroad. It welcomed the forthcoming conference of Asian and African writers in Tashkent as an event of major importance and anticipated an even greater interest at home and abroad in the Soviet brand of multinationalism. In October 1958, the meeting in Tashkent took place, attended by 170 writers from fifty countries in Asia and Africa. Hailed as the 'literary Bandung', the conference declared itself in favour of complete national independence for all peoples and of the abolition of colonialism. However, it also pleaded for the unity of all nationalities and no break with the West. The Russian hosts, keeping well in the background, made it plain that this unity could be modelled on the ideological solidarity of Soviet literatures while conceding the right to a 'national form'.

On the home front the trend was not towards a more liberal approach to the nationality problem but, on the contrary, towards greater russification. In December 1958, the new school reform made it possible for a non-Russian republic to omit the teaching of the native language in favour of Russian if the parents of the children so desired. The proposal stirred wide protests, especially among the writers, against what many regarded as an abrogation of the Leninist principle which made the teaching of the republican language compulsory in that republic. The protest was particularly strong in Azerbaijan and Latvia. However, in the end the proposal was accepted.

In January 1959, the results of the Soviet census dramatically revealed to the non-Russian intellectuals the extent of russification in the union republics. The Russians now account for 54·8 per cent of the total population. The losses suffered by the Ukraine, Belorussia, and the Baltic republics cannot be explained by the war; similarly the high proportion of Russians in the Kirgiz Republic (30·2 per cent; 11·7 in 1933), Turkmenian Republic (17·3 per cent; 7·5 in 1933) and, above all, in the Kazakh Republic (42·7 per cent; 19·7 in

[17] Ibid., pp. 30–31, 150. Some hope of re-appraising the old 'epic works of the peoples of the Soviet East, unjustly labelled "anti-popular",' is offered by L. Klimovich in his *Iz istorii literatur sovetskovo Vostoka* (Moscow, 1959), pp. 27–28.

[18] I. Tsameryan, *Sovetskoe mnogonatsionalnoe gosudarstvo, evo osobennosti i puti razvitiya* (Moscow, 1958).

[19] Ibid., pp. 153, 246, 268.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

1933; the Kazakhs are now a minority (30·0 per cent) in their own republic) confirm the denationalisation of these areas.

Encouraged by this progress and by Khrushchev's emphasis on 'the link between literature and the people', Soviet theorists have recently put out an even more advanced multinational slogan: *narodnost*. Two ingenious Ukrainian exponents [20] of this principle add the following supplements to the 'socialist in content and national in form' theory: a. The national character is connected with the present, not with the past (this, after the usual assurance that no one treasures national traditions more deeply than the Communist Party). b. The national distinctiveness of literature is determined not so much by language, customs, and nature as by its 'ideological kinship with the people'. c. National characteristics which are the result of the uneven development of Soviet nations should disappear. Hence, the 'young Kirghiz literature would hardly be sorry to see the disappearance of the differences between it and Russian literature which still existed some decades ago'.[21] Similarly, L. Klimovich claims (p. 22) that 'Russian literature was instrumental in destroying the traditions of patriarchal, tribal, and national limitedness'.

Finally, in January 1960, the Gorky Institute of the Academy of Sciences devoted a special session to the study of the 'relationships and influences of the national literatures'. Partly designed to oppose the bourgeois 'comparativist school' abroad, it proceeded to lay the foundation for the preparation of a new, conclusive, and exhaustive work on the theory and practice of Soviet multinational literature. As the director of the Gorky Institute, I. Anisimov, declared, 'we cannot be satisfied by studies in which this or that literature of one of the peoples of the USSR is treated in isolation from the process of development of the multinational Soviet literature'.[22] This portends yet another all-out effort to forge one mould for Soviet literature; yet does it not also betray a surrender to utopia?

THE never-ceasing and continually intensified campaign for the 'one and indivisible' Soviet literature is itself an admission that the forces resisting it are still powerful. Despite russification and assimilation, the national languages show today a renewed vigour. Although the Ukrainian journal *Movoznavstvo* (Linguistics) envisages in the period of transition from socialism to communism an even greater 'intensification of the role of the Russian literary language as the medium of international communication',[23] it contains a wealth of new linguistic material showing that research in dialectology and the Ukrainian language in general is being continued on a wider scale than before 1956. The ancient Kirgiz epic masterpiece, *Manas*, still captivates modern Kirgiz writers (Tokombaev). Above all, in spite of the 'freeze-up' after 1957, conditions in literature and criticism have remained far more liberal than they were under Stalin. The drive for a multinational literature is still on, but the iron discipline which used to be behind it seems to be lacking.

It is difficult to believe that the primitive festivals (*dekadas*) of national art and literature organised each year in Moscow in the best Stalinist tradition can be regarded by the intellectuals and writers of the non-Russian republics as anything but evidence of their cultural vassalage. Although less patronising than before 1953, Soviet literary policy towards the non-Russians still aims at submerging them in the Russian sea. Despite and perhaps because of the economic and educational opportunities which the Soviet regime offers non-Russian intellectuals, the reduction of their literatures to a carbon copy of Russian socialist-realism and of their art to folksiness, may no longer satisfy them. Recent literary developments in Poland and Yugoslavia, so contrary to Soviet policy, are bound to influence the national republics, especially those on the periphery of the USSR with either strong pro-Western traditions or a still vital Moslem heritage. As long as the present controls in Soviet literature continue to operate the trend to multinationalism will continue. But the dialectic of this policy is still in doubt—and so is its outcome.

---

[20] N. Shamota, *Khudozhnik i narod* (Moscow, 1960); M. V. Honcharenko, *Problema narodnosti literatury v marksystsko-leninskiy estetytsi* (Kiev, 1959).

[21] Shamota, op. cit. pp. 284, 295, 300.

[22] *Izvestiya Akedemii Nauk SSSR, Otdelenie literatury i yazyka*, XIX, 3 (Moscow, 1960), p. 266.

[23] I. K. Bilodid and O. S. Melnychuk, *Movoznavstvo*, 1959, XV, p. 17.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

WRITING IN CENTRAL ASIA

G. B. Morris

FOR the purposes of this article, the term 'Central Asia' will include the five republics of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kirgizia, Turkmenistan, and Kazakhstan. This differs from normal Soviet usage according to which Kazakhstan does not form part of Central Asia (*Srednyaya Aziya*). The article will restrict itself to a study of Soviet pronouncements about Central Asian literature made in the Union and republican Russian language press. The period covered is approximately 1957–59, with a brief historical introduction.

Before the Revolution the peoples of Central Asia either had no written language and literature, or had a literary tradition which was mainly poetical. The Soviet authorities, however, regard the degree of development of a people's literature as an index of the degree of development of its culture and economy as a whole. A fully developed literature, therefore, is both a symbol of the benefits of October and a means of 'agitation' and propaganda. Consequently the main aim of the Soviet literary authorities has been to implant and popularise such modern literary forms as the novel, short story, play, etc.

To say this, of course, is not to say that there were no westernising influences in Central Asian literature before the Revolution or that prose works were unknown. Russian culture had already begun to make itself felt and to find imitators in Central Asia before the Soviet period. The first author of Kazakh prose was Ibray Altynsaryn (1841–99). He accepted Russian culture as a means of educating the Kazakhs to eventual self-government. In his literary work he was much influenced by the great Russian prose-writers. Another Kazakh, Abay Kunanbayev (1845–1904), was a lover both of Oriental and of Russian literature. He was primarily a poet and translated into Kazakh not only Pushkin and Lermontov but also, from Russian translations, Goethe and Byron. His prose work *Gakliya*, a volume of maxims, is said to be a model of concise, pithy language. The Tajik Sadriddin Aini (1878–1958) began his first prose work *The Executioners of Bukhara* during the overthrow of the Bukharan Emirate in 1920, before the Soviet regime. His literary master was Gorky who strongly influenced his style. Aini was a leading spirit in the Soviet campaign to purge the literary Tajik language of its Arabic and Persian accretions so as to make it more intelligible to the people and a better medium for reproducing everyday speech. In quality of work Aini is the foremost Tajik prose writer and his reputation has received official endorsement.

It is obvious from the above few examples that Soviet literary policy found the ground to some extent prepared for innovation. Central Asian authors had already begun to turn to modern literary forms, and even to a lesser extent to the technique of realism. These tendencies would no doubt have continued, even if there had been no Soviet regime, as they have in neighbouring Asian countries such as Persia. Their development would, however, have been slower and probably more satisfactory. Modern Central Asian literature is a forced growth.

Although Central Asian writers do not seem to resent specifically the necessity to write in literary forms which are foreign to them, they might well resent their subordinate position on the Soviet literary ladder. The relation of the Central Asian literatures to Russian literature is that of disciple to master. The periodic ten-day festivals of literature and art which are held at Moscow, and at which the various republics demonstrate their achievements, are in fact examinations where the Russian writers and artists are the examiners. For instance, at the 1958 Uzbek Ten-Day Festival Uzbek writers were urged by their Moscow colleagues to 'write more often, more boldly, and better'.

GALLING though this situation must be for Central Asian writers, they themselves could hardly deny that some supervision is necessary. For a variety of reasons, of which

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

unfamiliarity with a foreign literary tradition is only one, Soviet Central Asian literature is inferior technically to the other literatures of the Soviet Union.

The evidence for this statement comes from the critical articles in the Soviet press and from the reports of the meetings of the republican Writers' Unions. In 1956, at a plenary session of the Management Committee of the Kazakh Writers' Union, it was asserted that Kazakh verse was characterised by 'wordiness, rhetoric, inability to provide a powerful solution of a theme, inability to respond to events in the life of the republic and of the whole Soviet land in such a way as to sear the hearts of men with its voice' (*Literaturnaya Gazeta,* 27 December 1956). Turkmen writers also were criticised for their inability to draw character and for their pale dialogue (*Turkmenskaya Iskra,* 5 July 1957). In 1958 Tajik playwrights were criticised in the Writers' Union for writing wordy plays without conflict or action, with shallow characterisation and careless, inexpressive dialogue. Prose works were said to be trivial, monotonous and at times 'quite hopeless'. The short stories of M. Sharki, said nevertheless to be a talented writer, were, all except one, so bad in subject, language and composition as not to be literature at all (*Literaturnaya Gazeta,* 26 April 1958).

In the previous year no less a personage than the president of the Tajik Writers' Union, M. Tursun-zade, had himself been criticised before the Tajik Central Committee for having left his previously much-praised poem 'The Voice of Asia' in an unfinished state in the original, trusting to the Russian translation to gloss over its faults. The original Tajik version was said to be no more than a first draft (*Kommunist Tajikistana,* 15 November 1957). It may be noted in passing that this is not an isolated case, and that such tricks are a natural result of the subordination noted above of Central Asian literatures to Russian literature.

It was the young writers of Uzbekistan, however, who received the most comprehensive criticism on technical grounds (*Zvezda Vostoka,* 1958, No. 12). They were criticised for faulty construction, love of clichés, unnatural lifeless dialogue, the use of *dei ex machina,* a naive conception of the positive hero, and a general inability to draw character. A peculiarly Asian trait is their high-flown language, even in dialogue. The article gave the following example (the heroine speaks): 'This man, my husband, in his nobility, appears to me like the sun, thrusting his rays through gloom. That man I curse like a shade before my eyes, but this man I worship.' Finally, the article concluded, a depressing similarity of theme and treatment, even of characters, can be noticed in different works by different authors. The setting is a factory (or kolkhoz) and the home. The heroes, whether workers, collective farmers, or intellectuals, experience and suffer the same things. The basic conflict is likely to be that between a long-suffering wife and a feudally-minded husband or, more recently, between an ideal husband and a spoiled wife.

It is difficult to decide how correctly the above criticisms represent the technical skill of Central Asian writers. The critics pay more attention to faults than to virtues and are, besides, prone to make up their indulgence to established writers by excessive severity to young writers. It is however obvious that the low level of technical achievement among young writers is causing concern. Many reasons are alleged—among them idleness of the writers concerned and lack of guidance from experienced writers and writers' organisations. Soviet commentators do not stress the novelty of the forms used as a cause, nor do they mention the inhibiting effect of the constant caution necessary to prevent realism from becoming too realistic about unpleasant facts, i.e. from becoming 'crude naturalism'. Finally, the Soviet eagerness that all literary forms should be represented in Central Asian literature has obviously led to the publication of works which would, perhaps, never be considered for publication in any other country. This has made the quantitative achievement of Soviet Central Asian literature impressive but at the expense of quality.

IN any discussion of the technical shortcomings of Central Asian literature in the Soviet press, the literary critic is a constant scapegoat, either for spoiling young writers with

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

too indulgent criticism or for criticising too severely and discouraging them.

In theory the task of the literary critic is more than literary. He is expected to comment also on the ideological correctness of a work's theme and its development. Unless he has inside information the critic may sometimes be in doubt as to what is ideologically correct and what is not. Mukhitdinov, in his speech to the first Congress of the Intelligentsia of Uzbekistan on 11 October 1956, noted that critics were avoiding the period 1905–17 'through fear of permitting some mistakes in their evaluation of jadidism, a movement to which even some progressive Uzbek writers and poets at times adhered'. The critics, he continued, were so shy of the twenties that one got the impression that the only writer active then was Khamza. The time had come, Mukhitdinov said, to investigate the cases of certain writers who, although they had made mistakes and had had their works suppressed, had not been hostile to either party or people. As an example he named Abdulla Kadyri (Dzhulkunbay), who had been suppressed in the late thirties because of nationalist tendencies. However, those critics who had been unwise enough to follow Mukhitdinov's lead and who had, perhaps, gone too far, came in for reproof after Khrushchev's theses on the connection between literature and art and the life of the people. Izzat Sultanov wrote that while it was quite correct that Kadyri, Fitrat and Chulpan (who both seem to have suffered the same fate as Kadyri) should have been rehabilitated, their rehabilitation should not give rise to any doubt whether there had been such a thing as nationalism at all. These writers had been rehabilitated not because there was no nationalism in the thirties, but because by that time they had abandoned their former nationalist standpoint (*Lit. Gaz.* 29 July 1958).

Critics are often criticised, also, for treating established writers too leniently. On at least one occasion, however, a critic was severely treated in the press for 'unscrupulous' and 'negative' criticism of established writers. The critic was I. Levshina and the writers were two pillars of Tajik Soviet literature—Rakhim Dzhalil and Satym Ulug-zoda. Of the former Levshina had written: 'His heroes' characters are so primitive that it is impossible to name one profound, memorable image. Dzhalil . . . does not think or feel with [his heroes] and so they leave his pen as pale, philosophising shadows.' Of the writer's post-war stories she wrote: 'In spite of a variety of themes and the wide scope of the material . . . [they] are distinguished neither by profundity of thought nor by artistry of execution. They are contrived, lacking in genuine conflict, and "edifying".'

Of Satym Ulug-zoda, who has been a writer since 1932 and received the Red Banner of Labour for services in the development of Tajik art and literature, Levshina wrote (about his play *Men with Red Sticks*, 1948): 'The author has paid little attention to the characters of his dramatis personae.' His *Return* is said to be 'a weak imitation of a story by Vasilevskaya', and 'extremely weak—the characters unfinished and primitive'. (*Kommunist Tajikistana*, 15 March 1959.) The suspicion is strong that Levshina was herself criticised not because her criticism was wrong or too strongly worded, but because both Dzhalil and Satym Ulug-zoda are too firmly entrenched in official favour to be criticised with impunity. Critics can hardly be blamed for reserving their criticism for young writers.

THE period under consideration begins approximately with N. S. Khrushchev's paper 'On the Connection between Literature and Art and the Life of the People' (11 May 1957) in which he criticised certain writers, and specifically Dudintsev, for showing Soviet actuality in a bad light. The paper reasserted complete ultimate party control over works of art. The 'thaw' appeared to be over.

Khrushchev's words were echoed all over Central Asia but most graphically in Tajikistan. There, M. Tursun-zade declared in June 1957 that 'advanced' writers had always served the party and were continuing to do so. He ended with a threat not to 'coddle' writers who lacked party spirit: 'We will obtain from them . . . truthful works which will help the party to carry on the battle for our just cause' (*KT*, 21 June 1957). In September of the same year he explained that of course writers should not *ignore* the seamy side of Soviet life but should show it in such a light that the result is an

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

affirmation of what is new and advanced (*KT*, 28 September 1957).

In all republics, also, the criticism was voiced that the life of the people was more varied than literature seemed to show. Writers were urged to go out and study the life of the people before writing about it. As a corollary came exhortations to writers to deal more with modern themes.

Central Asian literature has tended to concentrate on the past. This is certainly true of the most celebrated recent novels, Berdy Kerbabayev's *The Decisive Step* and Mukhtar Auezov's *Abay's Way*. The first of these novels deals with the revolutionary period in Turkmenistan, of which, and especially of the activities of General Malleson's mission, it gives a biased description. The human thread for this account is provided by a Turkmen-Artyk, who is led by feelings of personal loyalty to support a local anti-Russian bandit, although he himself is steadily becoming more and more pro-Russian and pro-bolshevik. Finally, after the withdrawal of the British, Artyk takes the 'decisive step' and joins the bolsheviks. The second novel is the most famous Kazakh prose work. It tells the life-story of Abay Kunanbayev. The author, Auezov, doyen of Kazakh literature, is an authority on Abay's life and work and has often been criticised in the past for holding heterodox opinions. In fact the first volume of *Abay's Way* was criticised for idealising the feudal system and minimising the importance of class-contradictions in the pre-revolutionary Kazakh village. Now, however, it is officially regarded as one of the glories of Kazakh literature.

In view of this fact it is strange that it was in Kazakhstan that the demand for works on modern themes was most emphasised. After a message from the Kazakh Central Committee noting the fact that modern themes are rare in Kazakh Soviet literature, the president of the Writers' Union, G. Musrepov, addressing the fourth Writers' Congress, demanded a return to modern themes. The rot had set in, he said, with S. Mukanov's *Pretty Hair* (approximately 1928), which dealt with the position of women in a patriarchal and feudal society, and Kazakh literature had followed his 'infectious example' through inertia ever since. He himself and Auezov were also to blame. Nevertheless, Musrepov went on, young people should know the history of their country, of the battle of the workers for liberation, and the heroic history of the Communist Party. Consequently Kazakh writers, while turning towards modern themes, must continue to give a reflection of the revolutionary past of each people.

Not surprisingly this confused and self-contradictory exposition came in for criticism from Mukanov (Auezov did not speak). Mukanov claimed that anything, old or new, connected with revolutionary transformations and socialist construction was 'modern'. The seal of authority, however, was set on Musrepov's demands by Dzhandildin, a secretary of the Kazakh Central Committee (*Kazakhstanskaya Pravda*, 10–12 March 1959).

The debate on the meaning of the word 'modern' took place also in Turkmenistan at the second plenary session of the Writers' Union. Here Kerbabayev, author of *The Decisive Step*, argued that the word did not necessarily include 'topicality'. All that was necessary was the 'spirit of the [modern] epoch'. His own novel, therefore, was 'contemporary' because it was permeated with 'a modern interpretation of the events of those distant years'. He did not, however, explain how this made his novel different from any other historical novel, whatever the epoch (*Turkmenskaya Iskra*, 13 June 1959).

Even novels set in modern Central Asia are not always 'contemporary'. Here too the past sometimes intrudes. In an article in *Kommunist*, 1959, No. 13, the same Dzhandildin who has already been mentioned points out that modern Kazakh writers often give an outmoded picture of present-day Kazakhstan, often 'showing their heroes . . . in national robes and headgear. . . . These works also contain as obligatory features the "*yurt*" and meat cooked Kazakh fashion, which the characters eat with their hands while sitting on the floor'.

WHY are modern Central Asian writers so fascinated by the past? One of the reasons is almost certainly to be found in the party's dogma that Soviet literature should be socialist in content but national in form. The present age,

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

according to an article by M. Auezov (the Kazakh author) and M. Fetisov in *Kommunist*, 1959, No. 12, is an age during which the peoples of the Soviet Union are to 'merge' into each other and ultimately to disappear. This process is said already to have begun. The writers, of whom the party demands works of a distinctively national colour about nations which are supposed to be rapidly losing their distinctive national characteristics, find themselves, therefore, in a dilemma and, not unnaturally, look for these distinguishing characteristics in the past.

It is obvious, also, that many writers resent this 'merging' which they see in full swing around them. Auezov and Fetisov write of tendencies to 'make a fetish of the old national, literary forms, to idealise the past and campaign for a restoration of the old social system'. This has led, they write, to attempts at the rehabilitation of undesirable bourgeois writers.

Finally, it is often dangerous to venture too near the present. In 1957 S. Mukanov published in *Sovetski Kazakhstan*, Nos. 1–3, a novel dealing with what is still the most 'contemporary' subject in Kazakhstan—the development of the virgin lands. This novel, which was entitled *The Rolling Steppe*, gave a black picture of 'nationalism' and corruption among local party cadres and drew attention to the presence among the volunteer workers of hooligans, drunkards and criminals. The reaction of the Kazakh Party was to censure severely the editorial board of *Sovetski Kazakhstan* and to direct Mukanov to rewrite the novel. Early in 1959 he was reported to be still at work on *The Rolling Steppe*—'which is dedicated to the self-denying work of young patriots' (*Komsomolskaya Pravda*, 15 February 1959).

The drive for a wider treatment of modern themes is evidently having uneven success. In Kazakhstan, for example, long poems written between 1955 and 1959 'although they differ not only in subject but in skill' have one common feature, 'their authors' desire to show the high ethics and heroic deeds of Soviet people'; and 'it is especially pleasing that almost all the poets write about the present day' (*Sov. Kaz.* 1959, No. 1).

In Kirgizia, on the other hand, the efforts of Kirgiz dramatists, at least, were insufficient and were not favourably received in Moscow at the second Kirgiz Festival of Art and Literature. D. Dzhumabayev, following up Moscow's criticisms, writes that not only are there few Kirgiz plays on modern themes but that those that exist are, as a rule, bad. Of K. Dzhantoshev's play *In One House*, which deals with rural life, Dzhumabayev says: 'it has no sharp conflicts or philosophical generalisations . . . The characters are developed in insufficient depth'. The same dramatist in another play has drawn his negative heroes with great skill, but as for his positive heroes 'the whole trouble is that he has not found such vivid colours as for his negative heroes'. Also criticised were *The Heart Beats* (K. Malikov) for an unconvincing story, and *Narrow Ravine* (T. Abdumonunov) for bad characterisation. M. Alybayev's *It Happened at a Spa*, on the other hand, although its characterisation and dialogue were excellent, had 'no deep development of the theme or a wide background of the present day against which people with complex characters and high aspirations could be shown' (*Sovetskaya Kirgiziya*, 19 February 1959).

Not only Mukanov was criticised for having written ideologically unsatisfactory work during the 'thaw'. In Tajikistan three young writers Ye. Lopatina, M. Fofanova, and G. Mirzoyev were named by Tursun-zade in June 1957 (*KT* 21 June 1957). They were criticised again at an open meeting of the Tajik Writers' Union in September (*KT* 28 September 1957). It was revealed on this occasion that Mirzoyev had written a poem entitled 'Fagfur' on 'the resettling of the mountaineers in the fruitful valleys' which showed the operation in a less idyllic light than the official account. Fofanova made a public confession of guilt and apologised. Lopatina fought back, stressed her Soviet patriotism, and made no apology. Mirzoyev held out until November, when he was reminded that he had 'cast doubt on the acts carried out by the party and government in the interests of the republic's economy'. It was evident that the question had ceased to be purely literary. Mirzoyev made a public apology and promised to do better in the future (*KT* 15 November 1957).

In Kirgizia in September 1957 three writers were declared to be guilty of 'crude naturalism'

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and of having distorted Soviet life, M. Aksakov, Ye. Kovski and N. Baytemirov. Aksakov made a public confession of guilt but neither Kovski, who was said to be completely divorced from life, nor Baytemirov responded (*Sovetskaya Kirgiziya*, 26 September 1957).

The list of 'distortions of Soviet reality' is slim and it is obvious that if newspaper reports are a true guide there was no ideological crisis in Soviet Central Asian literature.

The crisis is rather one of low technical accomplishment in young writers. Writing in the Soviet Union is a profession. On becoming a writer one joins a trade union and receives a union card. One is not subject to normal labour discipline but one is constantly bombarded with official exhortations to write more, to write better—exhortations from which even the most highly regarded living Soviet writer M. Sholokhov was not exempt during the long period of silence between the first and second parts of *Virgin Soil*. In such an atmosphere it is difficult to be an amateur writer. From newspaper and magazine articles one receives the impression that a Soviet citizen finds it fairly easy to become a professional writer on the strength of one book, and from the criticisms of young writers' work which appear in the pages of the Soviet press it is obvious that in Central Asia at least far too many are taking this step. The auguries for the future of Soviet Central Asian literature, therefore, seem to be poor.

Only part of the reason for this state of affairs is to be found in the fact that Western literary forms and the realist tradition are not native to Central Asia. They are no more native to Turkey, Persia, or India, and yet literature in these countries is in a far more healthy state. Part of the difference probably lies in the resentment of Central Asian writers at their position of subordination to Russian writers, a resentment which is even leading some of them to reject Western forms in favour of traditional Asian forms. A relaxation of party control, while it would inevitably produce much that would be undesirable from a party point of view, would also result in a far more interesting and worthy body of literature in Central Asia.

The WORLD TODAY
Chatham House Review

To be well informed, you need the facts. In the WORLD TODAY experts bring to the general reader up-to-date and reliable information on current world problems. Factual and objective, the WORLD TODAY also focuses on internal political and economic conditions in individual countries, in order to provide a background to events of international significance.

Recent issues include articles on Persia Today, A Cycle of Political Events in Laos, Independent Mauritania, Aspects of Progress in Mexico since the Revolution, and Western Germany: A Pre-Election Survey.

Monthly 2s. 6d. per copy : 30s. a year : (In U.S. and Canada $4.80)

Orders may be sent to booksellers and newsagents or to:

Oxford University Press, Amen House, Warwick Square, London, E.C.4

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

SOVIET JEWISH LITERATURE: THE LAST PHASE

C. Szmeruk

DURING the first months after the German invasion of the USSR, Yiddish publishing was almost completely wiped out and has never been restored to its former strength. In the first days of the war, the journals and newspapers that appeared in the annexed territories, and all publishing houses in Soviet White Russia, came under German rule. In a very short time the capital of the Ukraine had fallen. This was the largest centre of Yiddish publishing. The evacuation of Moscow in autumn 1941 put an end to the work of *Der Emes* publishing house. In the winter of 1941–42 the majority of Jewish Soviet writers volunteered for the Red Army and those who remained fled to various parts of the USSR.

It would seem that the retreat from the Ukraine and from White Russia and the evacuation of Moscow were made amid such confusion that it was impossible to transfer the publishing houses to safer ground. Even those writers who were scattered throughout the country were powerless, nor were they in a position to set up new independent organisational frameworks. There were many reasons for this, and much can be attributed to the general state of confusion that existed in all aspects of civil life in the USSR during the first two years of the war. They did not have the technical wherewithal, such as Hebrew type. But these difficulties could have been surmounted, as later developments were to prove. Thus it appears that the main reason for the cessation of Yiddish publishing for a very long period was bound up with the nature of the Soviet policy of centralisation which allowed new organisations to be set up only by the central bodies or with their prior permission. The demand by concentrations of refugee Jews in the towns of the Urals, in Siberia, and in the Asian republics to be provided with literature in Yiddish from local publishing houses was of no avail. For a long time after the destruction of the former frameworks there was no way of setting up a new organisation with sufficient authority of its own.[1]

A body of this type was established within the special propaganda bureau, called the Soviet Information Bureau, which was set up for the duration of the war. This institution dealt not only with the dissemination of official news on the progress of the war, but was also the Soviet body which organised and directed Soviet propaganda during that period in the USSR itself and outside its boundaries. The Bureau set up a number of Anti-Fascist Committees whose task it was to direct all war propaganda, and to reach as wide a circle as possible. A Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee was also set up together with the Committee of Slavic Peoples, the Committee of Soviet Women, the Committee of Soviet Youth, and the Committee of Soviet Scientists. But while the other committees had no real significance for the Jewish population within the Soviet Union, since their activities were directed towards spreading propaganda abroad, the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee, headed by Shlomo Mikhoels, from its inception carried out its allotted functions relative to foreign countries, and also became the national Jewish representative body for internal affairs. There had been no Jewish central public body since the Jewish sections of the Communist Party (*Yevsektsii*) were disbanded in 1930.

---

[1] Of all the publishing houses from the occupied territories it was only the publishing house of the Ukrainian Writers' Association, set up in Ufa, which succeeded in reviving its activities. Worthy of mention is the fact that the Writers' Association of the Ukraine published in Ufa in 1942–43, six books translated from Yiddish into Russian by the following Jewish authors resident in the Ukraine: R. Balayasne, A. Gontar, D. Hofstein, H. Polyanker, Y. Fefer. In addition there appeared an anthology of poems translated from the Yiddish, published by the Uzbek Government in Tashkent in 1942. Except for the above-mentioned translations, no other original book in Yiddish or in translation is known to have appeared during the war, outside the framework of *Der Emes* Publishing House in Moscow.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE importance of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee was felt beyond the orbit of those Soviet Jewish organisations known to us from the beginning of the revolutionary period. This was the first time that representatives of the various circles within the Soviet Jewish community—Yiddish writers and Jewish authors writing in Russian, Jewish actors and well-known Jewish artists, men of science, scholars, and soldiers, most of whom had been far removed from Jewish life for more than 20 years—joined together in one body. When permission was granted, all of these people, horrified by the Nazi peril, combined to carry out joint Jewish activities.

Even the Committee's task as it had been defined—to spread Soviet propaganda abroad—was an important innovation in the life of Soviet Jewry. The Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee renewed the connections with world Jewry which had been severed during the thirties. It should be pointed out that this Committee supported Jewish publishing activities during the war and after it. After no Soviet Yiddish newspaper had appeared for over a year, the Committee succeeded in founding a new central Jewish weekly in June 1942. This was in Kuibyshev, where there had never previously been a Jewish printer or a Jewish publishing house. After the Germans had been pushed back from Moscow, and following the victory at Stalingrad at the beginning of 1943, the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee began to bring back to Moscow the Jewish writers and journalists who had been living in the eastern regions of the country. This step was taken at the request of the Soviet Information Bureau which required Soviet propaganda in Yiddish for circulation abroad. Through the efforts of these writers and journalists, *Der Emes* Publishing House began to function in Moscow again. The Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee not only became the centre of all Jewish communal activity in the USSR and well known to Soviet and world Jewry, but also became a centre of Jewish literature unparalleled in the history of the Jews of the USSR.[2]

In 1941 and up to the evacuation of Moscow, *Der Emes* Publishers brought out 20 books and pamphlets including a book by L. Zinger which had previously been in preparation and to which was added a chapter that brought it up to the time of the war. All the other books were prepared for publication during the war. In 1942 only one pamphlet actually appeared, while the second book was printed in 1943. In 1942, therefore, there was a vacuum in Yiddish publishing caused by the flight from Moscow. In 1943, *Der Emes* Publishing House was reorganised through the efforts of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee, and during the next three years it published 56 books and pamphlets.

The publications put out in Yiddish during this period differed in type and content from those issued prior to the war. Certain types of Soviet Yiddish literature are completely lacking during these years. There is not one anti-religious book; there is no translation of *belles-lettres*; no textbooks were printed (Yiddish schools no longer existed), and it was only in 1945 that two books by a Jewish writer from the pre-revolutionary era, Y. L. Peretz, appeared. But there were no works by Sholem Aleichem, which up to the war had always been on the lists of Soviet Yiddish publishers. Yiddish works written during the war can be divided into two main types: translations (mainly from Russian) on non-Jewish subjects

[2] There is still no complete description and evaluation available of the work of the Soviet Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee during 1941–48. After examining all the information that has reached us about the liquidation of the Committee, beginning with the murder of S. Mikhoels in 1948, we cannot agree with the denial of the importance of the Committee for the Soviet Jews contained in S. Schwarz, *Jews in the Soviet Union* (1951), and B. West, *Struggles of a Generation* (1959). Neither differentiates between the sincere efforts and great desire of many of the Committee's leaders to set up an internal representative body and the obstacles placed in their way by the Soviet authorities. The quotations from the Jewish leaders on the internal tasks of the Anti-Fascist Committee (Schwarz, pp. 204–05) and the testimony in B. West, op. cit., pp. 210–16, in themselves actually reveal the importance of this body for Soviet Jewry. It is essential to see these things within the general Soviet picture; they cannot be judged by criteria outside this framework. Thus it is surprising to read Schwarz's statement: 'The summary suppression of JAC in 1948 by the Soviet authorities in itself was scarcely a loss to the Jewish population of Russia' (p. 205). Besides the extensive printed material, there exists a wealth of memoirs and important testimonies which enable the scholar to appreciate the significance of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee in the USSR itself.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

—propaganda speeches, war propaganda, instructions for the population during the war, etc., numbering 27 in all, and literature on Jewish subjects, numbering 52, of which 31 were original *belles-lettres* in Yiddish, and 21 were books and pamphlets about Jews during the second world war.

Books on Jewish subjects (we have included translations describing the extermination camps and translations of biographies of Jewish war heroes) make up almost two-thirds of all Soviet Yiddish publications during the war, a much higher proportion than before the war.

The editions of Yiddish books were larger than those of 1939–41. For example, books by D. Bergelson were printed in editions of 20,000 copies and 10,000 copies, while a book of poems by Markish was published in an edition of 7,000 copies. The constitution of the USSR was printed in an edition of 25,000 copies, but at the same time, books on Jewish subjects were also printed in 10,000 copies, and literary anthologies counted editions of 7,000. We have proof that Yiddish publications were sold during the war in large numbers and it appears that no books remained in the stores of *Der Emes*. An official document states that during 1941–43 books in Yiddish worth a million rubles were sold, and if we assume that the average cost of one book was 10 rubles, we may assume that at least 100,000 books and pamphlets in Yiddish were circulated during that period alone.

The weekly *Eynikayt*, which was transferred to Moscow in 1943, began to appear three times a week in March 1945.

Participating in the work of *Der Emes*, under the auspices of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee, were Russian authors of Jewish extraction who contributed to the publishing of information on the extermination of Russian Jewry and Jewish heroism during the war. If we take into account that the overwhelming majority of *belles-lettres* in Yiddish which appeared during the war years is pervaded with national Jewish content, we come to the conclusion that although the number of books amounted to only 21 per cent of the 1940 total, this smaller number had more Jewish content in it than the earlier and larger number.

DURING the three years from the end of the war to the final stopping of Soviet Yiddish publishing activities, some attempts to reinstitute publishing were made. But the results cannot compare with the situation which existed before the war. Except for *Der Emes* Publishing House in Moscow, which continued its activities during those years and even succeeded in expanding, none of the other publishers of Yiddish books before 1941 were reopened and there were no signs of their doing so.

In the Ukraine the Publishing House for National Minorities was not reopened. It seems that there was no longer any necessity to publish books in the Ukraine in German, Bulgarian, and Polish, and this publishing house, which had earlier included a Yiddish department, was not reorganised. No other publishing organisation was given this task in the Ukraine after 1945. As a result only one book in Yiddish appeared in the Ukraine after the war, published by the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences, an institution which was by its nature restricted to publishing only scientific works. The efforts to renew publishing in Yiddish in Kiev in the middle of 1947 are apparent from the report on a convention of Jewish writers in Kiev (*Eynikayt*, 26 June 1947). Amongst the subjects discussed at this convention was the account given by H. Polyanker of 'The Steps Taken to Renew Yiddish Publishing in Kiev'. We have found no additional information on this matter. But the fact that no Yiddish works were published in Kiev until the end of 1948, except for seven issues of the literary almanac *Der Shtern*, is evidence of the intense opposition to the efforts of the Jewish writers living in Kiev.[3] This was the total output of Yiddish publishing in the Ukraine after the war.

In White Russia the position was even worse. From time to time notices appeared about preparations for publishing books in Yiddish in Minsk, but it would seem that in Minsk—as in Kiev—it was not deemed necessary to establish a Jewish department within the framework of

[3] In July 1946 a notice appeared about the *Kiever Almanakh* which was prepared for publication by *Radyanski Pismenik* Publishing House (*Eynikayt*, 9 July 1946), but there is no doubt that the reference is to *Der Shtern* whose first issue appeared only at the end of 1947.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the White Russian Publishing House.[4] In 1947 one literary anthology was published in Minsk, and this was the sum total of White Russia's contribution to Yiddish publishing during the three years after the end of the war.

It would seem that in Birobidjan futile efforts were made to set up a Yiddish publishing house to publish the works of Jewish writers living in the Jewish Autonomous Region in the Far East.[5] But they succeeded in bringing out only two booklets in Yiddish and three issues of the literary almanac *Birobidjan*.[6]

This lamentable record of Yiddish publishing in the Ukraine, White Russia, and Birobidjan during the three years following the end of the war was, first and foremost, the outcome of the efforts of the Jewish communal leaders and writers, who demanded that the authorities renew Yiddish publishing. The testimony of S. Kaczerginski on the failure of his efforts to reopen the Yiddish newspaper in Vilna after the war is an indication of the pressure necessary to publish the few almanacs and books referred to above.[7] It would seem that the policy was imposed from above and not left to the decision of local bodies. In Moscow, too, *Der Emes*, the only remaining publishing house, was unable to overcome the obstacles preventing its complete rehabilitation. Soviet Yiddish publications for the years 1946–48 (other than periodicals), numbered 114 in all, of which 110 were brought out by *Der Emes*.

THE first discussions after the war on the publication programme of *Der Emes* were apparently not held until the middle of 1946. They were attended by most of the Jewish writers who lived in Moscow, and their main arguments concerning the plans for the second half of 1946 and for 1947 set out to prove the urgent necessity for expanding the publication programme of *Der Emes* in order to satisfy the requirements of Soviet Jewry after the destruction of the war years. The report on the discussion does not mention the names of the books to be published during the following 18 months —except for two: an anthology of Bialik's poems in Yiddish and an anthology of the poems of the American Jewish poet M. L. Halpern. In August 1946 the Bialik anthology was ready for printing.[8] Neither book appeared nor was mentioned in later publication programmes of *Der Emes*. Thus it can be presumed that after the famous speech by Zhdanov in September 1946, when there was a radical change in the party line after the relative freedom that existed during the war years, the programmes of publishing houses, including *Der Emes*, were revised. This is a possible explanation for the fact that during the whole of 1946 only 18 books appeared in Yiddish in the USSR.

The detailed publishing programme of *Der Emes* in 1947—the first made public after the war—was not announced in *Eynikayt* until 1 February 1947. It would seem that only then was official permission granted for the programme, and the director of the publishing house, L. Strongin, allowed to make it public. From this programme, of which we do not have full details, it becomes apparent that *Der Emes*'s plans were much more extensive than the 47 books and pamphlets in Yiddish that appeared in 1947. Many of the books scheduled for 1947 were actually published in 1948, and when the programme of *Der Emes* for 1948 and 1949 was made public it still contained books announced for 1947.[9] Many books that

[4] *Eynikayt* of 21 May 1947 contains a review of the works of the Jewish writers who returned to Minsk after the war. Reference is made to an anthology of stories by I. Platner, an anthology of poems by H. Kamenetski, and a collective literary anthology, but apparently these books had not appeared up to the time of the liquidation in November 1948.

[5] On the works of writers in Birobidjan, see *Eynikayt* of 4 December 1944. On the plans of the regional publishing house in Birobidjan for 1949 see *Eynikayt* of 30 October 1948

[6] During the war the region was closed to civilians because of its proximity to the Japanese border. In 1946–47 there were signs of a movement to escape to Birobidjan, especially from the Ukraine where the Jews had returned as refugees after the war. Widespread activities in connection with the settlement of these refugees were carried out by the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee and in Birobidjan itself. Much information about settlement in Birobidjan after the war can be found in issues of *Eynikayt* for those years.

[7] Schwarz, op. cit., p. 207.

[8] For the consultations on *Der Emes* see *Eynikayt* of 6 June 1946. In the newspaper *Dos Naye Lebn* (Warsaw) of 2 August 1946 an item appears stating that the anthology of Bialik's poems was ready for the press.

[9] Four books translated from Yiddish into Russian were published by *Der Emes* in 1947: Sholem Aleichem, *Tevye the Milkman*; an anthology of stories

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

were officially advertised in *Eynikayt* to appear in 1946–48, did not appear at all, and several of them were not even mentioned in the programme for 1949. Some are worth mentioning in detail:

(1) An anthology in memory of the Soviet Jewish writers who died during the second world war.
(2) A literary anthology, *In Soviet Paths*, marking the 30th anniversary of Yiddish literature in the USSR.
(3) A Russian-Yiddish dictionary (40,000 words) prepared by the Jewish section of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences.
(4) B. Mark's book on the Bialystok Ghetto revolt.
(5) R. Kviatkovska's *In the German Concentration Camps.*
(6) Y. Rabinowitz's book on the Jewish artist, Judah Penn.
(7) Yiddish textbooks by E. Falkovitsh and Nussenbaum.
(8) A history of the Jews in Russia in the 19th century, by Heylikman (in Russian).
(9) The Black Book of USSR Jewry (in Russian).[10]

At the beginning of 1946 a special committee was set up in Moscow to prepare an anthology of Jewish heroism in the struggle against Fascism on all fronts during the second world war. This committee requested the co-operation of the American Committee of Jewish Writers, Scholars, and Artists.[11] From that time on there is no further reference to this committee, or to its programme.

It is clear, therefore, that those 114 books and pamphlets in Yiddish that appeared from 1946 to 1948 are no indication of the numerous works planned for publication and which, at least in part, were ready in manuscript form, or even submitted to the printers. It can be assumed that other works, whose publication was announced before Zhdanov's speech and even after it, were shelved because of their Jewish national content or for other ideological reasons. But it seems that a number of books that could have been published under the new conditions, such as works by Sholem Aleichem, did not appear because of difficulties that confronted *Der Emes* within the State Publishing House (OGIZ). The Jewish writers complained time and time again in the pages of *Eynikayt* that *Der Emes* was failing to carry out its programme and suggested a special request to OGIZ for assistance. We are not able to determine what type of obstacles were put in the way of *Der Emes*. Perhaps OGIZ already had instructions to prevent the renewal of *Der Emes*'s activities, and thus gave no assistance in carrying out the authorised programmes of the Jewish department. It is also possible that the paper shortage after the war presented difficulties and caused the curtailment of *Der Emes's* activities. At all events, it would seem that the discrepancy between the plan to print 1,250 printers' sheets during the first months of 1946, and the 69 sheets that were actually printed (5·5 per cent), cannot be put down to such explanations as the shortage of paper or the inefficiency of the Director.[12] We must assume that when *Der Emes* Publishing House began to function after the war, there was already much discussion going on in Moscow about the future of Yiddish publishing, similar to that which had taken place in Kiev in the summer of 1939. Proof of this can be found in the repeated

by David Bergelson; Gurstein's book on Sholem Aleichem, and Smolyar's book on the Minsk Ghetto.

[10] *Eynikayt*, 1 February, 5 April, 21 May, 1947; 10 February 1948. Of the books to have been published in the USSR, a number were later published outside its borders. The literary anthology (No. 2) was published in New York in 1949; B. Mark's book on the Bialystok Ghetto uprising appeared in Warsaw in 1950; R. Kwiatkowska's book was published in Buenos Aires in 1950. Part of the material intended for *The Black Book* was printed in the USSR in Yiddish in the collections *Murderers of Peoples.* A volume of this material was also published in Rumanian, Bucharest, 1947. In 1946 *The Black Book* appeared in New York containing a large amount of Soviet material collected by the editorial staff of the Soviet *Black Book.*

[11] Representatives of all the Jewish circles in the USSR participated in this convention. Among them were the Jewish writers V. Grossman and General Katz.

[12] Complaints about *Der Emes* were published in *Eynikayt* on 6 and 18 June 1946, on the necessity to apply to OGIZ and the figures of the number of sheets in the first half of 1946 are to be found in the issue of 18 June 1946. There is also a criticism of Strongin's work. But it is a fact that Strongin retained the directorship of *Der Emes* up to the end of 1948. It seems probable that these complaints were prepared in advance by the directors of *Der Emes* as a means of supporting their request to OGIZ.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

references in *Eynikayt* to the great demand for Yiddish books, and to the successful sales of such books in many places throughout the USSR. Such references were frequent during 1948. Thus an announcement in *Eynikayt* about the sale of Yiddish books in Odessa lists more than 5,000 copies sold during the first half of 1948.[13] During this time Yiddish books worth 67,000 rubles were sold in Kiev. But, together with announcements about the demand for Yiddish books, there are complaints against distributors of Soviet books and newspapers who neglected Yiddish publications. It appears, for example, that the workers of 'Soyuzpechat' in the Ukraine did not place the Yiddish literary almanac on sale at the kiosks, nor did they open the parcels of almanacs that arrived from Moscow. In Zhitomir the writer Y. Bukhbinder got 320 new subscribers for the almanac *Der Shtern* in only four days. His success moved the Jewish section of the Writers Union in the Ukraine to send groups of writers to the towns and townlets of the Ukraine to publicise Yiddish books.

IN the light of such obstacles to the rehabilitation of Soviet Yiddish literature and of its total cessation in November 1948, this campaign must be seen as a bold move on the part of the Jewish writers and communal leaders in the USSR who set out to ensure the continuation of their work by proving that there existed a demand for Yiddish books and that it was economically worthwhile. And all this was carried out despite the pervading sense of danger.

It should be pointed out that the composition of Soviet Yiddish literature during 1946–48 differed little from that put out during the war, despite the increase in ideological pressure.

In 1947 an anti-religious book appeared once more in Yiddish, as well as two textbooks; in 1946–48, 19 reprints of the classics in Yiddish, including three volumes of the *Complete Works of Sholem Aleichem*; also the *Selected Writings* of Lermontov—the only book of Russian *belles-lettres*. These books are testimony to the desire of those responsible for *Der Emes* to return the publishing house to the status it had enjoyed before the war. Despite the strict control over Soviet Jewish writers after Zhdanov's speech, original *belles-lettres*—

	1946	*1947*	*1948*	*Total*
(a) *Translations on non-Jewish Subjects*				
(1) Politics, propaganda and popular science	2	10	5	17
(2) Poetry	1	—	—	1
(b) *Publications on Jewish Subjects*				
(1) Original Soviet *belles-lettres* written in Yiddish	8	23	23	54
(2) New editions of Sholem Aleichem, Peretz and Mendele	1	9	9	19
(3) Literature about Jews in the Second World War	4	3	7	14
(4) Language, reviews and biographies of writers	2	1	3	6
(5) Yiddish textbooks	—	2	—	2
(6) Anti-religious literature	—	1	—	1
Total	18	49	47	114

accounting for 54 items of the total of 114—continued to deal with Jewish problems during the war, with a definitely Jewish-centred orientation. Together with the new editions of Sholem Aleichem, Peretz, and Mendele (19 items) and the 14 items about Jews in the war, we can see that after the war, at least 80 per cent of Soviet Yiddish publications aimed to meet the needs of the Jews in the Soviet Union after the holocaust.

This response is also apparent in the distribution of publications during 1945–48. The record edition was that of the *Alefbeys* by Kvitko, which was printed in 25,000 copies. In the absence of Yiddish schools this was the only available means of teaching the Hebrew alphabet to Soviet Jewish children. Gurstein's book on Sholem Aleichem, which was put out to mark the 30th anniversary of the writer's death, was printed in 20,000 copies. Works by Sholem Aleichem and Peretz were printed in editions of 15,000. Beginning with the second volume, Sholem Aleichem's *Works* in 20 volumes was increased from 5,000 to 7,000 copies. Even more characteristic were other

[13] *Eynikayt* of 17 August 1948. The books that had the greatest success in Odessa were: Works of Sholem Aleichem—1,500 copies; a primer by Kvitko—300 copies; and a Memorial Volume for Mikhoels—400 copies.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

books that were printed in 15,000 copies: the *Anthology in Memory of Mikhoels*, the *Stories* of David Bergelson on the war, and B. Mark's book on the Warsaw Ghetto uprising. Details of the sale of books in Yiddish in Odessa reveal that the size of each edition was meticulously calculated according to the demand and the type of book.

Another indication of the circulation of Yiddish publications can be obtained from the distribution of the three Yiddish almanacs published in 1947–48. A total of 17 issues of these almanacs appeared up to the end of 1948. Their overall circulation reached 12,000–15,000. These figures reflect the trend that began after the war. The overall circulation of the two Yiddish magazines and the almanac in mid-1939 was 4,150.[14]

In 1946–48 *Der Emes* maintained its firm ties with the Jews writing in Russian. Its publishing programme is very characteristic in containing not only books translated from Yiddish, but also those written in Russian originally and prepared specially for the Jews who no longer required books in Yiddish. Grinvald's book in Russian on Mikhoels, which was published in 1948 by *Der Emes* in 75,000 copies, can throw light on this problem. The sub-title calls it a short biography of S. Mikhoels, but it also gives the reader detailed information about Jewish customs, and about events not directly connected with Mikhoels himself. There are references to heroes in Jewish history, to Purim, to the belief in the Messiah and the redemption of the Jewish people; and the story of Bar Kochba is told. All these references are presented in a serious manner well integrated into the account of Mikhoels' life, but with a clear intention of using this opportunity to present these matters to the reader who knows nothing about them.[15]

The Soviet Jewish publication programmes that were shelved in 1946–48, many of the books published during those years, and the efforts to distribute Yiddish books, all reflect the great change that took place in Soviet Jewry during the war and after it. Undoubtedly, this turning towards Jewish feelings could have influenced the direction and content of Jewish publishing in the USSR in later years. However, conditions under the Soviet regime hampered the growth of Yiddish publishing in its last years. Apparently the authorities saw no other course open to them for the suppression of this Jewish national awakening than to wipe out all vestiges of Yiddish publishing and other Jewish activities in the USSR that were still permitted till the end of 1948.

(This article is part of a larger study on Jewish literature in the Soviet Union.)

[14] For comparison it is worthy of mention that in 1959 the main literary magazine in Latvian, *Karogs* was published in an edition of only 6,000 copies. The Latvian population of the USSR was 1,400,000 (*Pravda*, 4 February 1960), a figure which is less than the number of Jews in the USSR after the war.

[15] Ya. Grinvald, *Mikhoels. A Short Critical Biographical Sketch* (Russian). OGIZ—*Der Emes*, Moscow, 1948, 99 pp. Even if we assume that the content was directed to the Russian reader, this too was an expression of Jewish self-defence against the anti-Semitism that spread throughout the USSR during the war.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE ORIGINS OF LITERARY CONTROL

Ernest J. Simmons

FROM the earliest days of the Russian Social Democratic Workers' Party (RSDRP), predecessor of the present Communist Party of the Soviet Union, its leaders were concerned about problems of freedom of the press. The printed word was a vital necessity in teaching revolutionary theory, in opposing the regime in power, and in propagandising for new adherents. Because of the cleavage in the RSDRP between the Bolsheviks led by Lenin and the Mensheviks led by Plekhanov, a struggle for control of the party's publications took place. As an outlaw party in Russia, its publications were illegal and were printed abroad.

These early efforts of the Bolshevik and Menshevik leaders to control the party press from 1898 to 1905 reveal the growing tendency of each faction to deny the other the right to present opposing views.[1] Lenin in particular had begun to regard the party press as a medium that should be largely devoted to promoting his own interpretation of Marx and his own theories of revolutionary action. With this in mind he endeavoured to promote the selection of his own adherents to editorial boards, though in this effort he was by no means always successful in the early years of the RSDRP, any more than he was in forcing through his personal views in matters of theory.

Yet Lenin was not uninfluenced by the long Russian struggle for a free press in which the RSDRP had been one of the many victims. Even within the limits of a party newspaper, where the demand to conform to party beliefs and principles might well have been made to all contributors, Lenin felt compelled to offer some concessions to those who did not differ from him on the fundamentals of party policy. In the statement which he drew up in 1900 to announce the publication of the famous RSDRP newspaper *Iskra* he declared, after emphatically ruling out the participation of the 'Economists' and 'Legal Marxists': 'But in carrying on our literary work from the point of view of a definite tendency . . . we will not reject polemical material sent in by comrades; on the contrary, we are prepared to give it considerable space in our columns. Open polemics conducted in the sight and hearing of all Russian social democrats and class-conscious workers, are necessary and desirable in order to explain the profoundness of the differences that exist, in order that disputed questions may be discussed from all angles, to combat the extremes into which representatives of various views, various localities, or various branches of the revolutionary movement inevitably fall'.[2]

During his early editorial activities on behalf of the RSDRP Lenin became convinced that the press, as a vital instrument of the party, should be manipulated and controlled by its leadership, even by the leader himself. 'All party literature', he wrote in June 1905, 'both local and central, must be absolutely subordinated to the Party Congress and acceptable to the central and local organisations of the party. The existence of party literature, not connected organisationally with the party, is not permitted'.[3] Traditional considerations of freedom of the press were not forgotten, but they were largely regarded as something to be fought for in the revolutionary struggle against despotism, and to be exploited in those democratic countries where freedom of the press existed. Here was the beginning of a policy that was to have important consequences after the Bolsheviks seized power.

The RSDRP, however, had been largely concerned with an illegal press. The many obstacles to be overcome, and the party's position of outlawry, unquestionably sharpened the antagonism of its leaders to any suggestion that they liberalise their publications. But after the 1905 revolution it became possible for the RSDRP to publish legally in Russia. Writers

[1] The publications in question were *Rabochaya gazeta, Iskra, Vpered,* and *Proletarii*. For a brief account of these publications, see *O partiinoi i sovetskoi pechati*. Sbornik dokumentov, Moscow, 1954, pp. 23–85.

[2] 'Ot redaktsii' (quoted in ibid., p. 26).

[3] V. I. Lenin, *Sochineniya* (4th ed.), IX, 144.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

were now flocking to the party standard and offering their services to the party press, and this forced Lenin to reconsider the relation of a legal party press to freedom of the press. Freedom of the press had been one of the demands of the revolutionary workers. He wrote a rather unpretentious article on the subject, but one which has nevertheless become the principal guide and primary authority for the position of the Soviet Communist Party on belles-lettres and the press.

The article in question is 'Party Organisation and Party Literature', and it appeared in the 13th issue of *Novaya Zhizn* (New Life), 15 November 1905. *New Life* was the first legal Bolshevik newspaper to appear after the revolutionary outbreak that ushered in the year 1905.[4]

LENIN begins his article by pointing out that the differences between the legal and illegal press in Russia had begun to vanish since the revolution and that this situation in turn created certain problems for the party press. For the revolution has not ended, he wrote. 'If it is still not in the power of tsardom to conquer the revolution, it is also not in the power of the revolution to conquer tsardom.' Previously the illegal party press could be kept safe and uncontaminated. Now, with both sides in a state of armed neutrality, as it were, and both having legal access to publications, Lenin was frankly worried about possible bourgeois influence on the now legal party press. The only way to offset the influence of the bourgeois press, said Lenin—its low morality, careerism, individualism, and profit-seeking—was to invoke the principle of 'party literature'.

What is the principle of party literature? Lenin answers in the article: 'It amounts to the fact that for the socialist proletariat literary endeavour cannot be an instrument of individual or group profit . . . independent of common proletarian aims. Down with non-party litterateurs! Down with the literature of supermen! . . . Literary work must be established as part of organised, systematic, united, social-democratic party work'.

Lenin plainly argues here that in the competition between the bourgeois press and the now legal party press, the only way for the latter to preserve its political orthodoxy, its integrity and honesty was to maintain the harsh code of the illegal party press. But he is fully aware that this would arouse the indignation of the 'bourgeois intelligentsia', who would deplore the 'bureaucratisation of the competition of free ideas, the freedom of criticism, the freedom of literary creation . . .'. Lenin was correct in anticipating criticism, but he also tried to disarm it by a statement in the article which is of some consequence: 'There is no disputing that literary work lends itself less than anything else to a mechanical equalising, to a levelling, to the rule of the majority over the minority. Nor is there any disputing that in this kind of endeavour it is absolutely necessary to guarantee the largest measure of personal initiative, individual tastes, thought and fantasy, form and content'.

It is easy to agree with these observations, which would appear to be virtually incompatible with the idea of control of literary expression, though it should be noted that Lenin never once asserts that the writer should be guaranteed full freedom of expression. This passage, however, is rarely quoted or referred to, and perhaps understandably so, by the many Soviet theorists, and especially the post-war ones, who make copious use of this article to justify emphasis on *partiinost* (party spirit) in literature.

It should be pointed out, however, that Lenin promptly qualifies and even undermines the import of this passage by one that immediately follows: 'All this is indisputable, but it all merely demonstrates that the literary aspect of party activity of the proletariat must not be thoughtlessly identified with other aspects of party activity of the proletariat. All this does not in the least refute what is alien and strange to the bourgeoisie and to the bourgeois democratic position, namely, that literary endeavour must be connected unfailingly, positively, and uninterruptedly with the remaining aspects of social-democratic party work'. Then he adds

[4] V. I. Lenin, 'Partiinaya organizatsiya i partiinaya literatura', *Sochineniya*, X, 26–31. *New Life* was published in St. Petersburg and ran from 27 October to 3 December 1905. Lenin was abroad when *New Life* first appeared, but when he reached Russia in early November 1905, he took over effective control of the newspaper and published 12 articles in it.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that the newspapers must be organs of the various party organisations, and that writers must join these organisations which in turn must control every step of publication and distribution.

Having taken away with one hand what he had given with the other, Lenin justifies it by setting forth the differences between the party press and the bourgeois press. This reformation in the legal party press cannot be achieved quickly by passing resolutions, he writes, but gradually, through recognition by 'the whole conscious, social-democratic proletariat' that this new problem exists. 'Having just emerged from the captivity of feudal censorship', he declares, 'we do not want to enter, and will not enter, into the captivity of bourgeois commercial literary relations. We wish to create and we will create a free press, not only in the sense of freedom from police interference, but also in the sense of freedom from capital, freedom from careerism, and last but not least, in the sense of freedom from bourgeois, anarchistic individualism'.

ALL that Lenin had written up to this point in 'Party Organisation and Party Literature' must be regarded as a preparation for what follows. And since the rest of the article was of considerable consequence in the development of literature and controls in the Soviet Union, it seems wise to translate it in full. Lenin continues:

> These last words may seem paradoxical or ridiculous to my readers. What! some intellectual, I suppose, some ardent disciple of freedom will cry out: What! You want to submit such a refined and individual endeavour as literary creation to the collective! You want questions of science, philosophy, and aesthetics to be decided by the majority vote of workers! You deny the absolute freedom of the absolutely individualistic process of creation!
>
> Be calm, gentlemen! To begin with, the matter concerns party literature and its submission to party control. Everyone is free to write and speak whatever he pleases, without the slightest hindrance. But every voluntary association (and in this I number the party) is also free to drive out those members who use the house of the party to preach anti-party views. Freedom of speech and of the press must be complete. But the freedom of associations must also be complete. In the name of freedom of speech I am obliged to grant you the full right to cry out, to lie, and to write what you please. However, in the name of freedom of associations, you are obliged to grant me the right to enter into or to break an association with people who say this or that. The party is a voluntary association which would inevitably disintegrate, first ideologically and then materially, if it did not cleanse itself of members who preach anti-party views. The boundary between party and anti-party is defined by the party programme and by tactical resolutions of the party and its statutes, and finally by the total experience of international social-democracy, of the international voluntary associations of the proletariat, continually including in their parties separate elements and trends which are not entirely consistent, not entirely pure Marxist, not entirely correct, but also continually undertaking periodic 'purges' of their parties. So will it be with us, you gentlemen who advocate bourgeois 'freedom of criticism' *within* the party: our party is now all at once becoming a mass party, we are now experiencing a sudden transition to open organisation, many inconsistent people (from the Marxist point of view) will now unavoidably come to us, perhaps even some Christians or some mystics. But we have strong stomachs; as Marxists we are as hard as rock. We shall digest these inconsistent people. The freedom of thought and the freedom of criticism inside the party will never force us to forget about the freedom of groups of people in the voluntary associations called parties.
>
> In the second place, gentlemen bourgeois individualists, we must tell you that your speeches about absolute freedom are so much hypocrisy. In a society based on the power of money, in which the toiling masses are reduced to poverty and the handful of rich have become parasites, there cannot be real and substantial 'freedom'. Are you free from your bourgeois publisher Mr Writer? From your bourgeois public which demands pornography from you in pictures with frames, prostitution in the aspect of 'additions' to 'holy' pictorial art? Indeed this absolute freedom is a bourgeois or anarchist phrase (for as a philosophy anarchism is

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

bourgeoisism turned inside out). It is impossible to live in a society and be free from it. The freedom of the bourgeois writer, artist, or actress is merely disguised (or hypocritically masked) dependence on the moneybags, on bribery, or on an allowance.

And we socialists expose this hypocrisy, tear away the false signboards, not in order to attain a non-class literature and art (possible only in a socialist, classless society), but to oppose to the hypocritically free literature of the bourgeoisie a really free literature openly connected with the proletariat.

This will be a free literature because neither gain nor careerism, but the idea of socialism and sympathy for the workers will recruit ever new forces into its ranks. This will be a free literature because it will serve not the satiated heroine nor the 'upper ten thousand', bored and suffering from flatulence, but the millions and tens of millions of toilers who constitute the flower of the country, its strength, its future. This will be a free literature fertilising the last word of the revolutionary thought of humanity with the experience and living work of the socialist proletariat and creating a continual interaction between the experience of the past (scientific socialism crowning the development of socialism from its primitive, utopian form) and the experience of the present (the present struggle of our worker comrades).

To work, then, comrades! A difficult and new but a great and glorious problem is before us —to organise an extensive, many-sided, varied literary activity in close and unbroken union with the social-democratic workers' movement. All social-democratic literature must be party literature. All newspapers, magazines, publishing firms, etc., must immediately undertake the reorganisation necessary in preparation for this state of affairs, so that they may enter fully into the varied initial efforts in the several party organisations. Only then will 'social-democratic' literature become truly social-democratic, only then will it be able to fulfil its duty, only then, even in the framework of bourgeois society, will it be able to tear itself away from slavery among the bourgeoisie and join with the movement of a truly advanced and, to the end, revolutionary class.

FORTY-ONE years later, in 1946, the late Andrei Zhdanov, then a member of the Politburo, declared publicly in his well-known 'Report on the Journals *Zvezda* and *Leningrad*': 'All the principles on which the development of our Soviet literature is based are to be found in this article'[5]; and Lenin's emphasis upon *partiinost* in literature, Zhdanov regarded as his principal contribution. This was not exactly a discovery by Zhdanov, for Lenin's article, after a long period of total neglect, was rediscovered in the early 1930s and occasionally referred to by literary critics who also singled out for comment Lenin's stress on *partiinost*. However, the prominence given it by Zhdanov in 1946 resulted in its widespread postwar adoption as the *locus classicus* for all writers, and Lenin's principle of *partiinost* became the essential ingredient of Soviet belles-lettres. The misuse of Lenin's article is worth dwelling on here.

The polemical and practical purpose of Lenin's article, inspired by the special situation that developed in 1905, is clear enough. With the easing of censorship and the possibility of starting a legal party press, Lenin feared the consequences of various outside influences on its doctrinal purity and propagandising efficiency. The revolutionary events of 1905 stimulated the interest of many thinkers, artists, and writers in the cause of the workers. Some of them even knocked at the doors of the RSDRP and sought an outlet for their convictions, which were often more mystical than Marxian. Even before Lenin took charge of the first legal party paper, *New Life*, one of these well-intentioned contributors urged a merging of mystical doctrines with those of social-democracy.[6] Lenin's remedy for this situation, as indicated by the passages from the article quoted above, was to demand that the same rigid discipline of the illegal party press should be applied to the legal party press. Its contributors would be party members or at least sympathisers, but all must submit to party control and the party political line. The only freedom involved was the freedom to get out if one persisted in dissent.

Quite clearly, Lenin was not in any major way concerned with belles-lettres in the article.

---

[5] A. A. Zhdanov, *On Literature, Music and Philosophy*, London, 1950, p. 38.

[6] Cf. B. Meilakh, *Lenin i problemy russkoi literatury* (2nd ed.), Moscow, 1951, pp. 150–53.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In writing about 'party literature', he obviously had in mind political newspapers, magazines, and pamphlets. On the whole, it was the only, and generally accepted meaning of the term at that time. Never once does he employ the Russian terminology 'artistic literature' (*khudozhestvennaya literatura*) which ordinarily differentiates creative writing from writing in general (*literatura*). Hence it is a flat misrepresentation on the part of later Soviet critics to make it seem, as they do, that Lenin subjected belles-lettres to the same criteria as he applied to the political writings of the party press. The one place in the article where he appears to have belles-lettres in mind, the passage quoted above which begins: 'There is no disputing that literary work lends itself less than anything else to a mechanical equalising . . .'. suggests that he recognised the difference between political propaganda and the creative efforts of the literary artist. Finally, it is surprising to note that the substantive *partiinost* does not appear once in the whole article, though Zhdanov, as well as numerous Soviet critics after him, have written endlessly of 'the Leninist principle of *partiinost* in literature',[7] meaning the principle of the party spirit in creative literature, whose initial formulation is attributed to Lenin's article. Such a principle is simply not stated there.

Even in the second part of the article, where Lenin considers the subject of freedom of the press, the position of the purely creative artist does not hold the centre of his attention. He recognises that 'literary work', meaning by this any form of writing, requires 'the largest measure of personal initiative'. In general, he upholds the freedom of the writer, although he takes the usual Marxian position in asserting that such freedom in bourgeois society is largely a deception. But this freedom, he maintains, has nothing to do with party literature. For any political association or party is a voluntary organisation which has the right to demand conformity to party dictates from those who write in its name, whereas those who dissent have the right to leave the party. This requirement, of course, is not exceptional among political parties in any country, although it is unlikely that they would demand from members the complete acceptance of party controls in their writings that Lenin describes.

It should now be apparent that the attempt to justify, on the basis of Lenin's 1905 article, the official Soviet postwar requirement that creative literature serve solely the interests of the party and actively embrace the principle of *partiinost*, amounts to a deliberate misreading of the article. Further, not only was Lenin not concerned there with belles-lettres, but in making his demand that those who write for the party must accept its orders he recognised that any dissenter was free to leave the RSDRP and air his views in the press of a competing political party or in the non-party press. Needless to say, there is only one political party in the Soviet Union and nothing that could properly be designated as a 'non-party press'. In short, the conditioning political factors and the freedom of the press implicit in Lenin's argument do not exist, nor is their absence noted by the Soviet critics who today apply it to Soviet literature.

Before leaving the subject, however, it is tempting to speculate on the implications that may be drawn from the position Lenin takes in his article. His limited regard for the writer's independence and for freedom of the press plainly derives from the long democratic struggle for these goals under tsardom. Though Lenin does not especially dwell upon the purely creative writer, it may be conjectured that his concept of party discipline would have made little distinction between a party creative artist and a party journalist. Both used words to communicate and therefore both could be regarded as propagandists subject to party control. Actually this turned out to be pretty much the future party position. On the whole, the rigidity of Lenin's position on party literature when the party was not in power suggests that he would be more rigid and more inclusive once the party obtained absolute power. In any event, it will be instructive to consider his position on the freedom of the press when that actually occurred.

THREE days after the Bolsheviks seized power (10 November 1917), the Council of People's Commissars, under the chairmanship

[7] A. A. Zhdanov, op. cit., p. 38.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of Lenin, issued a Decree on the Press, which reads as follows:

> In this grave and decisive hour of revolution and of the days immediately following it, the Provisional Revolutionary Committee has felt it essential to take a whole series of measures against the counter-revolutionary press of all shades.
>
> Outcries from all directions have been raised at once to the effect that the new socialist government has violated a basic principle of its programme by infringing upon the freedom of the press.
>
> The government of the workers and peasants directs the attention of the people to the fact that in our society what is in fact hidden behind a liberal mask is the freedom of the propertied classes to take the lion's share of the whole press in their own hands and thus freely poison the minds and cause confusion in the consciousness of the masses.
>
> Everybody knows that the bourgeois press is one of the most powerful weapons of the bourgeoisie. Especially in this moment of crisis when a new authority, the government of the workers and peasants, is growing stronger, it is impossible to leave this weapon in the hands of the enemy at a time when it is no less dangerous than bombs and machine guns. That is why temporary and exceptional measures were taken to shut off the stream of filth and slander in which the yellow and green press would willingly engulf the recent victory of the people.
>
> As soon as the new order is consolidated, all administrative measures against the press will cease, full freedom will be established for it within the limits of responsibility before the courts, and in accordance with the broadest and most progressive regulations.
>
> Believing, however, that restraints on the press, even in moments of crisis, are permissible only within the limits of the absolutely necessary, the Council of People's Commissars decrees:
>
> 1. To subject to prohibition only those organs of the press which (1) call for open resistance or disobedience to the government of the workers and peasants; (2) sow discord by obvious slanderous perversions of fact; (3) summon to action of an obviously criminal character, i.e., action subject to legal punishment.
>
> 2. The temporary or permanent suppression of any press organ shall be put in force only by decision of the Council of People's Commissars.
>
> 3. That the present regulation has a temporary character and will be replaced by a special law when normal conditions of social existence are established.[8]

It is very likely that this decree was drafted by Lenin, and of course it has to do essentially with the daily press and not with belles-lettres. But it cannot be too strongly emphasised that the thinking and actions of the Bolsheviks on the administration and content of journalism bear a direct relation to creative literature, for they regarded both as highly important instruments for achieving the ends of the party. However, the traditional heritage of the democratic movement of the past guided the action of the new government in its initial stand on freedom of the press. Despite the familiar Marxian debunking of 'bourgeois freedom of the press' in the decree, the Bolsheviks were patently reluctant to take advantage of a situation of crisis to ban the whole opposition press. Perhaps the insecurity of their own power had something to do with this concern. Additional evidence, however, shows that the whole question continued to disturb the political conscience of the Bolshevik leaders during the first years of the Revolution.

IN the early months of 1918 a state of near-chaos existed in the periodical and non-periodical press. A Commissariat of the Press was established to administer publishing and a Revolutionary Press Tribunal was set up to take legal action against those who violated the provisions of the decree of 10 November 1917.[9] Yet local city Soviets did not hesitate to promulgate their own decrees on the functioning of the press. In January 1918, the Petrograd Soviet adopted such a measure, which began generously: 'No special permission is required for publishing any kind of printed work',[10] and indeed the demands made concerned largely the proper identification of printed matter.

[8] *O partiinoi i sovetskoi pechati*, op. cit., p. 173.
[9] 'Postanovlenie o Revoliutsionnom Tribunale Pechati', *Pravda*, 1 January 1918.
[10] 'Vremennye pravila o poryadke izdaniya periodicheskikh i neperiodicheskii izdanii v Petrograde', *Pravda*, 13 February 1918.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Over this period, however, a number of newspapers and a few magazines were suspended temporarily or permanently, and a steady stream of publishers and editors appeared before the Revolutionary Press Tribunal for various alleged offences, ranging from telling lies to counter-revolutionary utterances. In short, at the outset the Bolsheviks in power seemed willing to do something more than pay lip service to the freedom of the press which they had always advocated.

The opposition press, however, was more extensive than that of the party in power, and once it began to exploit the rising bitterness of the civil war which had started, the Bolshevik attitude towards civil liberties in general quickly altered. As early as the beginning of February 1918, a declaration in *Pravda* marked this stiffening approach: '. . . just as a military command at the height of struggle at the front would not permit the enemy freedom of propaganda hostile to its army, so, too, a revolutionary government at a time of struggle on the home front does not accord this kind of freedom to its enemies. To do otherwise would be to commit political suicide'.[11] Bolshevik intellectuals fell back on legal arguments not unfamiliar among political scientists in the West. No organised society, however it may have come to power, fails to put some limit on civil liberties; for a government has the right, even independently of its legal basis, to limit civil liberties, not only in the interest of their preservation, but also in order to protect the very legal basis of society. So went the Bolshevik argument, plainly influenced by Western non-Marxian theorists. That is, the power of the government cannot be limited by the subjective rights of citizens, for no one can expect a government, whatever its form or complexion, to submit to its own destruction simply in order to demonstrate its devotion to its legal foundations. Freedom of the press was one of the civil liberties sacrificed, and before the end of the summer of 1918 the open opposition press had been entirely silenced. Less than a year later, at the 8th party congress, Lenin, in summing up the achievements of the party press, declared—perhaps a little on the defensive because of the repressions—'They have blamed us and still blame us for the thousandth and millionth time for violating the freedom of the press, for repudiating democracy. Those who complain call a press democratic which has been bought by capital to be used by the rich for their own purposes. We do not call that democratic but plutocratic. Everything that bourgeois culture has created to deceive the people and protect the capitalists, we have taken from them in order to satisfy the political needs of the workers and peasants'.[12]

An effort was made to create the impression that in a situation of crisis extreme measures had been taken and that if the crisis were satisfactorily overcome there would be a reversion to some measure of freedom of the press. To a certain extent this turned out to be so, once the civil war had ended and the New Economic Policy was introduced. The attachment to democratic liberties died hard with some of the early Bolshevik leaders.

However, the party (now the Communist Party) had already taken the position, embodied in the first Soviet Constitution (1918), that the new government guaranteed the workers real freedom of expression because it had 'destroyed the dependence of the press on capital'.[13] This clearly implied that eventually all the press that depended on capital would be destroyed. When that point was reached there would then be a single, legal one-party press in all of Russia. And the 8th party congress of March 1919 merely reaffirmed the description of the functions and controls of the party press which Lenin had set down in his 1905 article: 'The congress believes that local organisations must immediately take measures for a rebirth of the party and Soviet press. The congress reminds the comrades that the press is the most powerful instrument of propaganda, agitation, and organisation, an irreplaceable medium for influencing the broadest masses'.[14]

(The second part of this article will be published in our next issue.)

[11] V. Bystryanskii, 'Revolyutsiya i pechat', *Pravda*, 2 February 1918.

[12] 'Iz rechi Lenina na VIII sezde RKP (b)', *Stenograficheskii otchet*, Moscow, 1919, pp. 22–3.

[13] *O partiinoi i sovetskoi pechati*, op. cit., p. 179.

[14] *Ibid.*, p. 211.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

PILNYAK AND ZAMYATIN

Two Tragedies of the Twenties

Max Hayward

THE year 1929 was a crucial one in Soviet affairs. The 16th Party Conference in April that year marked the total capitulation of political resistance to Stalin and the beginning of the absolute control of all forms of social activity. From this time onwards NEP, in retrospect, seemed like a golden age of freedom. Reading the Soviet press in this year one can follow, almost day by day, the extraordinarily rapid growth of the 'cult of personality' and the ever more obsequious conformity of political and intellectual life which were to become so familiar in subsequent decades and which still so markedly distinguish Soviet society, despite shortlived periods of uncertainty after Stalin's death, from any other society in the world.

It was in 1929 that one distinctive Soviet device, the campaign of vilification against certain chosen scapegoats with the object of terrorising a particular group into submission, was first applied to intellectuals. The campaign against Boris Pilnyak and Evgeni Zamyatin was a rehearsal for the sort of campaign which was to become commonplace later, and is very similar in its circumstances to the denunciation of Zoshchenko and Akhmatova in 1946. In both cases the victimisation of the two writers concerned was the signal for a sharp change in literary policy and a general purge. The alleged offences of the victims were of relatively little importance in the minds of their denouncers, compared with the terroristic effects for which they offered a suitable pretext. The only striking difference between the two cases is that the campaign against Pilnyak and Zamyatin shows certain defects of orchestration, not surprising, perhaps, in view of the relative inexperience of its instigators and the fact that the tragi-comedy was enacted in a society not yet entirely broken, which had still to learn the futility of resistance.

In 1929 Soviet writers were still organised in the loose, more or less spontaneous fashion characteristic of the NEP period. The single, streamlined Union of Soviet Writers was set up, by decree of the Central Committee, only in 1932. Until this time there was a number of nominally independent groups which carried on lively polemics with each other about literary doctrine and practice, and the role of the writer in post-revolutionary society. Needless to say, none of these organisations was overtly hostile to the regime, but there was considerable and outspoken resistance to the idea of art and literature being subjected to absolute political control. A vociferous minority, with what was at that time probably genuine fanaticism, demanded the submission of writers to the party. In 1929 the two main literary organisations—the All-Russian Union of Writers and the Association of Proletarian Writers (RAPP)—were divided precisely on this issue. The Union was made up primarily of 'fellow-travellers' (*poputchiki*) whose non-proletarian antecedents made them acceptable only in so far as they were prepared to be loyal, if passive, supporters of the regime. Most of the best writers, including many who are well known today (Leonov, Kataev, Kaverin, Fedin, Vsevolod Ivanov), belonged to this organisation. Boris Pilnyak was chairman of its Moscow headquarters and Evgeni Zamyatin was head of the Leningrad branch.

RAPP, on the other hand, was a militant organisation of writers claiming proletarian origin, or at least spiritual kinship with the workers, and asserting the 'hegemony of the proletariat' in literature. They regarded themselves as the politically conscious *avant-garde* whose mission was the creation of a genuinely new, revolutionary culture. For them the 'fellow-travellers' existed only on sufferance, and were regarded, according to the degree of their willingness to re-educate themselves, either as bourgeois specialists in literature, or as potential recruits to the ranks of the 'proletarian' writers. The latter desirable status could only be achieved, they maintained, by whole-hearted inner submission to the will of the proletariat and the party. It may be noted in passing that

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

there still seems to have been at this time a genuine feeling on the part of certain individuals that mystical union with the proletariat could lead to blissful liberation from the miseries of the lone, hag-ridden intellectual. The intolerable burdens of individual responsibility and guilt would be miraculously resolved in service to the collective. It seems probable that one reason for Mayakovsky's suicide in 1930 was his growing realisation that this particular solution to his many personal problems was not possible for him. A frequent comment on his suicide at the time was that it showed his failure to ' become one with ' the proletariat. RAPP's quasi-religious fervour was certainly effective in the case of some ' fellow-travellers ', but with the usual impatience of fanatics, they relied more and more on threats and coercion.

IN the doom-laden atmosphere after the 16th Party Conference, RAPP began to press more aggressively than ever before for domination of the literary scene. Its chairman, Averbach, enjoyed virtually dictatorial powers until 1932, when RAPP, having performed its allotted task of violently transforming the literary life of the country, was disbanded and made the scapegoat for ' excesses '. Artificially fostered ' class-warfare ', which was now the policy in the countryside, was paralleled in the cultural sphere by a drive for ' bolshevisation '. In practical terms this meant that the All-Russian Union of Writers had to be purged of all the politically hostile and even politically neutral elements which it harboured, and brought under the firm control of RAPP. This was done with the help of another organisation called ' The Federation of Associations of Soviet Writers ' (FOSP). FOSP was theoretically a kind of coordinating bureau between all the various writers' organisations (including such small ones as *Pereval* and *Lef*), but was in effect an instrument of RAPP. In April 1929 FOSP started the publication of *Literary Gazette*. This was the main vehicle for the attacks on Pilnyak and Zamyatin, who, as the leaders of the All-Russian Union of Writers, had to be discredited and removed before the business of ' bolshevising ' the fellow-travellers could be begun in earnest.

The campaign, which went on for about a month, was launched by the editor of *Literary Gazette*, Boris Volin, in a leading article in the issue of 26 August 1929. Volin began by saying that even though ' under the influence of Soviet public opinion, the fellow-travellers adapt their literary production to the demands of Soviet readers and publishers ' (a delicate way of referring to censorship controls), a number of ' unacceptable ' works nevertheless managed to find their way into print—how unacceptable they were was shown by their republication in emigré journals. Even worse than this, however, was the fact that certain works by Soviet authors had been published *for the first time* by White-guardists abroad:

> Pilnyak has written a novel *Mahagony*. There was no basis for including this work in the general ranks of our Soviet literature and it was rejected by the editors of Soviet journals. But, lo and behold, *Mahagony* suddenly appears in an edition put out by Petropolis, a firm run by White-guardists in Berlin. How could Pilnyak bring himself to hand his novel to them? Surely he understands that he was thereby establishing contact with an organisation malevolently hostile to the Soviet Union. Why did not Pilnyak, the chairman of the All-Russian Union of Writers, protest, if the novel was printed by emigrés without his knowledge and against his wishes?

Volin goes on to allege that Zamyatin had published his famous anti-utopian novel *We* in the social-revolutionary emigré periodical *Volya Rossii*, in Prague, and ends by accusing Ehrenburg of having published his novel *The Grabber* in two versions—one for consumption in the Soviet Union and a different one for emigré readers.

There are several odd features, explicable no doubt by poor staff-work and careless briefing, about this opening shot in the campaign. The first is that Volin concerns himself not with the nature of the works in question, but with the alleged fact of their deliberate publication abroad. As we shall see, both authors were easily able to show that there was scarcely any blame attaching to them on the score of deliberate publication abroad to avoid censorship at home. Indeed, after the publication of a self-exculpatory letter from Pilnyak, the main direction of the attack was abruptly switched to the allegedly anti-Soviet nature of the works,

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

though the obvious fiction of their having been intentionally smuggled abroad was rather lamely maintained, at least in the case of Pilnyak. The second interesting feature is the linking of the charge against Ehrenburg with the accusations against the other two, in view of the fact that it was immediately dropped and was never again referred to in the subsequent development of the campaign. Since Ehrenburg's offence was a quite obvious and demonstrable case of double-dealing, he should surely have been the main target, if the instigators of the campaign had been genuinely concerned only with the *mores* of their fellow writers. Their change of tack, combined with the dropping of the case against Ehrenburg, showed from the outset that the campaign had wider political ends. For their achievement, Pilnyak and Zamyatin, occupying as they did strategic positions in the Soviet literary world, had to be framed at all costs. Ehrenburg was not essential to the plan.

The next number of *Literary Gazette* on 2 September devoted the whole of its front page to the affair, reacting in characteristic fashion to the 'signal' which had been given the previous week. The banner headline 'Down with bourgeois tribunes masquerading as Soviet writers! Against collaboration with the Whites!' set the tone of the discussion which was to go on for the next few weeks. Pilnyak's reply to Volin was published in this same number. This seems to have been the only chance he had of publicly replying to his accusers. He says that *Mahagony* was only part of a longer novel that he was about to complete,[1] and that it had not, in fact, been rejected by Soviet journals, as Volin alleged. On the contrary, it had been accepted by *Krasnaya Nov* (the main outlet for the fellow-traveller writers) on condition that certain deletions were made. It had not appeared in the Soviet Union, not because it had been forbidden (indeed it had never got to the point of being submitted to *Glavlit*, the censorship), but because Pilnyak had decided to rewrite it, evidently taking account of the cuts suggested by Raskolnikov, the editor of *Krasnaya Nov*. He had taken this decision in February, but then in March he had received a copy of an edition published by Petropolis in Berlin. This, in fact, was how he learned about its publication abroad. As to how the manuscript had reached Petropolis, this had happened in accordance with a normal procedure among Soviet writers. At that time the only way in which they could retain any rights in their works abroad and put them under the protection of the international copyright law to which the Soviet Union was not a party, was to arrange for their publication abroad by some Russian firm like Petropolis simultaneously with their appearance in the USSR. Both Petropolis and another Russian firm called Grzebin existed mainly to perform this service for Soviet writers. Their motives were evidently commercial rather than political and, in any event, they could scarcely be called hostile to the Soviet Union. The channels by which they received manuscripts from the USSR were quite above-board and, indeed, quasi-official. Soviet writers interested in this type of contact normally had a Soviet lawyer to represent them. Pilnyak's lawyer, for instance, was a regular member of the Leningrad collegium of advocates and any manuscripts handled by him, including that of *Mahagony*, were sent to foreign publishers via VOKS. Pilnyak had sent a copy of the manuscript of *Mahagony* as a matter of routine to his lawyer, who had sent it on to Petropolis. By the time Pilnyak had decided to rewrite it for publication in the USSR, it was too late to stop Petropolis publishing it. It seems, therefore, that if anybody was to be blamed, it was Petropolis—for jumping the gun and not bothering, as they usually did, to synchronise their publication with an emended Soviet version.

Making fun of Volin's suggestion that publication of his book by Petropolis meant that he had entered into contact with a White-guardist organisation, Pilnyak pointed out that Petropolis' catalogue consisted entirely of books by Soviet authors such as Alexei Tolstoy, Fedin, and Sholokhov. There was not a single work by a White emigré. In reply to Volin's question about his failure to protest against the appearance of *Mahagony* in Berlin, he says that he did not wish to embarrass his colleagues who had also published with Petropolis, or

[1] *The Volga flows to the Caspian Sea* which, when it appeared in 1930, included a modified version of the *Mahagony* chapters.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

VOKS, which had been responsible for conveying the manuscript to them. What he had done, however—and much more to the point—was to protest vigorously against the exploitation of the work by emigré publicists. (The full text of this letter of protest, which was published abroad, is given.) Pilnyak ends his letter on a rather pathetic note, foreshadowing abject surrender, and providing an interesting contrast with the defiant conclusion of a similar letter which Zamyatin wrote later on:

> Volin's article has already produced a reaction in *Komsomolskaya Pravda*. I feel that I am being baited (*chuvstvuyu sebya v atmosfere travli*). In such conditions it is difficult to defend oneself, and even more difficult to work. Nevertheless, as one of the founders of Soviet literature, I wish to and will write only for Soviet literature—this is the duty of any honest writer and man.

IN a long editorial reply this explanation of Pilnyak's is rejected, not because it is false, but on account of the nature of *Mahagony* itself, which is now for the first time described as 'anti-Soviet'. It is impossible to discuss at any length here the extent to which this charge is justified. Like many works of the period *Mahagony* was frank, to the point of ruthlessness, about Soviet internal conditions, but in this respect it was no more 'anti-Soviet' than Leonov's *Thief* or Ehrenburg's *Second Day*. The term 'anti-Soviet' was now, of course, freely being applied to works which were 'oppositional' within Soviet terms of reference, and it is certainly possible to find in *Mahagony* vague hints of sympathy for the 'right-wing' trend associated with Bukharin. Perhaps this is what was meant by 'anti-Soviet'. Pilnyak gave the work an explicit anti-Trotskyist twist, in the spirit of the times, and perhaps did not realise, at the time of writing, that Bukharinism, the seeming antipode of Trotskyism, was equally offensive in the sight of the Lord.

The editorial reply concludes that Pilnyak was clearly being hypocritical in his declarations of loyalty to the Revolution and that, despite his letter protesting against the use of his *Mahagony* by emigré journalists, he had, in fact, 'objectively' collaborated with them.

The editorial was followed by a long statement from RAPP, as well as from other minor and uninfluential groups now clearly captured by Averbakh and his men. This statement is in violent language and demands that the necessary 'organisational conclusions' should be drawn from the case, which allegedly showed that the ranks of Soviet writers had been infiltrated by the class enemy and that the All-Russian Union of Writers had been virtually captured for the bourgeoisie by its chairman, Pilnyak. The main 'organisational conclusion' was that the whole leadership must be changed and the Augean stables of the Union thoroughly cleansed by means of a purge and the re-registration of its members. In a word, the genuinely fellow-traveller sheep must be separated from the bourgeois goats.

The following issue of *Literary Gazette*, on 9 September, was again full of the case. In the intervening week various organisations had held follow-up sessions and passed resolutions very much in the spirit of the statement from RAPP. Since there were no reports of these meetings, one gets the impression that there was precious little rank and file support for the resolutions. They are all published anonymously, with the exception of the resolution from FOSP, which is signed by representatives of the constituent groups (Averbakh and Fadeyev for RAPP, Mayakovsky for REF—as LEF had recently been renamed—Fedin for the All-Russian Union of Writers, and eight other people). The FOSP resolution, evidently the result of a compromise between the different signatories, is a little milder than the statement of RAPP the previous week. It qualifies Pilnyak's 'act' as a political mistake bordering on a crime but says that it did not, however, have the character of 'premeditated wrecking' (*prednamerennoe vreditelstvo*). It concludes, nevertheless, by calling for the removal of Pilnyak from the chairmanship of the All-Russian Union of Writers, the election of a totally new board, and what it calls 'the re-forming of the rank and file'.

Side by side with this resolution there are some cautious attempts, in statements from individual writers, to defend Pilnyak, or at least to minimise the extent of his guilt. The most subtle came from Vsevolod Ivanov (who

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

has again in recent years been playing an honourable role in the somewhat sordid politics of Soviet literature),[2] who said that Pilnyak had merely made a mistake out of muddleheadedness, cunningly adding that if he had really committed some crime, as was being suggested, then he should be brought to trial.

But the most extraordinary and outspoken plea on Pilnyak's behalf was uttered by Maxim Gorki in *Izvestiya*:

> The punishment meted out to Pilnyak is far too severe. . . All my life I have waged a struggle for care in dealing with people and I think that in our present conditions this struggle should be carried on even more intensively . . . We have got into the stupid habit of raising people up into high positions only to cast them down into the mud and the dust. I need not quote examples of this absurd and cruel treatment of people, because such examples are known to everybody. I am reminded of the way in which petty thieves were lynched in 1917–18. These dramas were generally the work of *obyvateli* (obtuse philistines) and one is reminded of them every time one sees with what delight people throw themselves onto a man who has made a mistake, in order to take his place.

It looks from this that it may well have been Gorki's influence that saved Pilnyak, for a few more years at least, from any dire personal consequences.

On 16 September *Literary Gazette* reported that at last a general meeting of the Moscow branch of the All-Russian Union of Writers had been held. There is a vague and obviously very incomplete account of the debate which preceded the election of a new board. Only speakers favourable to the removal of the old board *in toto* and to a general purge of the organisation are quoted at length. The two main such speakers, Sutyrin and Olkhovy, were interlopers from RAPP, and they had no difficulty in squashing the pathetic attempts of one or two members of the old board, such as the veteran Marxist literary critic Lvov-Rogachevsky, to justify themselves. Their speeches, which were quoted only very briefly, were brushed off as vain endeavours to cover up for Pilnyak by denying that his behaviour had any political significance and ascribing it to 'foolishness'. Sutyrin and Olkhovy alleged that at least one third of the members of the Union were *pilnyaks* and that the only way to convert it from a refuge for 'anti-Soviet' elements into a genuinely Soviet organisation was to ensure that it was put under the control of 'politically conscious' people.

THE resolution passed by this meeting (incidentally, resolutions such as this were not yet invariably described as having been passed unanimously—this was a later refinement) marks a very important stage in the development of Soviet literature. The accompanying editorial was quite right to describe it as a 'great turning point' (*velikii perelom*). It formulated, for the first time so explicitly, the minimum demands to be made on anybody wishing to call himself a Soviet writer. The word *Soviet* in this context was now held to be no longer a merely territorial designation, but a political one, and anybody who wished to style himself in this way could no longer stand outside politics.[3] The resolution does not actually use the word *partiinost*—this was to come later in the thirties, as the result of a deliberate misinterpretation of a famous article by Lenin on the party attitude to literature—but in condemning *apolitichnost* (lack of political interest) and *bezideinost* (lack of ideological content) in *all* writers, it was already using the language made notorious by Zhdanov in the thirties and forties. Anyone to whom these terms could be applied was to be expelled from the All-Russian Union of Writers and the new board (headed by Leonid Leonov) was to make itself responsible for the general 'political guidance' of the Union as well as for the political 'education' of its members. It was alleged that the outgoing board had simply turned the Union into a club or a trade union for the protection of its members' material interests.

It was by now nearly a month since Volin had launched the whole affair with his article in *Literary Gazette*, and the brunt of the attack

[2] See my article 'Soviet literature in the Doldrums', *Partisan Review*, 1, 1960.

[3] Ironically, the very first number of *Literary Gazette*, in April 1929, a few months before the storm broke, had carried an article by Pilnyak in which he pleaded for a separation of literature from politics—very much on the lines of the Serapion Brothers' programme.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

had hitherto been against Pilnyak. Zamyatin's name was often mentioned and there were constant suggestions that the Leningrad branch of the All-Russian Union of Writers should investigate his case and have a house-cleaning on the lines of what was taking place in Moscow; but it was not until 23 September that *Literary Gazette* was able to report any progress from the other capital. This took the form of a curious statement from the executive bureau of the Leningrad branch of FOSP which suggested that the Leningrad writers (at least those of them who belonged to the All-Russian Union) had at first refused to join in the condemnation of Pilnyak and of the chairman of their own branch, Zamyatin. The statement revealed that the Leningrad branch of the Union had in fact issued a resolution on the case as early as 8 September, but this resolution had been 'quite unsatisfactory' because it had attempted to deny that the question of Pilnyak's and Zamyatin's behaviour had any political significance. However, two days later—one must assume under some pressure—the Leningrad branch had issued a second resolution (ignored by the Leningrad newspapers and now printed for the first time in *Literary Gazette*) which, says the statement from the Leningrad FOSP, was some improvement on the first one. Actually it is a dry and formal expression of approval for the condemnation of Pilnyak and Zamyatin already pronounced in Moscow. It promises that a general meeting of the branch would be held to discuss the situation.

There is a brief and sour account of this meeting from a Leningrad correspondent in the next number of *Literary Gazette*. From this it is evident that there was much opposition to the new line from Moscow and considerable support for the chairman Zamyatin, who was not present, but who had sent in what is described as his 'explanation'. The case against Zamyatin was in fact only put by three delegates from the new board of the Moscow branch and by a certain comrade Kozakov. They were answered, in a speech said to have been 'symptomatic' for the meeting, by V. Kaverin (another writer who, like Vsevolod Ivanov in Moscow, has proved a strong champion of more liberal trends in recent years). Kaverin, as far as one can judge from this inadequate report, stood up for the *status quo* in the organisation. There was an astonishing defence of Zamyatin by someone called A. Gizetti, whose speech, in the words of the correspondent, bore an 'obscurantist and anti-Soviet' character. Surprisingly, the gist of this outburst is given and actually gets more space in the account than any other speech. Gizetti said that he was very happy to have read Zamyatin's novel *We* and that Zamyatin was quite right to have it published abroad (as we shall see from his letter, he did not do this), because in the USSR people were gagged by censorship. The correspondent notes that these 'counter-revolutionary' utterances of Gizetti were received with some applause and that the sympathy displayed for his speech by those present left a most grievous impression. He then adds rather quaintly: 'Gizetti was not of course able to name any writers gagged by censorship. Perhaps he was referring to himself, a man who once took part in the Kronstadt conspiracy?' The correspondent's final words are: 'the sympathy shown for Gizetti's speech makes it clear that the Leningrad branch of the All-Russian Union of Writers needs a serious purge'.

THIS same number of *Literary Gazette* reported that in the meantime the new board of the Moscow branch had held its first meeting and had decided, in order to mark the break with the past, to change the name of the organisation to 'All-Russian Union of *Soviet* Writers'. At the same time it was resolved to re-register all members and expel unsatisfactory ones. The remaining ones would now, it was announced, have to submit to political education, and study groups were set up for this purpose.[4]

This was virtually the end of the affair. Pilnyak managed to save his skin by a grovelling submission, though it was not made in public. (The technique of enforced public recantation, so familiar in later periods, was yet in its infancy.) He was allowed to go on working and publishing for a few more years, until his disappearance in 1938.

Zamyatin's letter of explanation in reply to

[4] Three months later it was announced that as many as one half of the previous members had been purged.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Volin's charges was published only on 7 October, by which time the aim of breaking the back of the once relatively independent writers' organisation had been achieved. This extraordinary document, which exposes the whole business as a frame-up, came as a curious sequel. It seems at first sight odd that *Literary Gazette* should have published it at all, but in those days there was still a remarkable lack of co-ordination in the conduct of such affairs. Zamyatin begins by saying [5]:

> When I returned to Moscow after a summer journey the whole affair of my book *We* was already over. It had been established that the appearance of fragments from *We* in *Volya Rossii* in Prague was a deliberate act on my part, and in regard to this act all the necessary resolutions had been adopted.
>
> But facts are stubborn. They are more stubborn than resolutions. Every one of them may be confirmed by documents or people and I wish to make them known to my readers.

He then goes on to give the details: shortly after he wrote the book in 1920 he had sent it in the ordinary way to Grzebin in Berlin, to whom he was bound by contract and who at that time had branches in both Moscow and Leningrad. In 1923, with Zamyatin's permission, Grzebin had made available a copy of the manuscript for translation into English and then Czech. Zamyatin gave notice in the Soviet press at the time that these translations were to appear, but there was no protest from any quarter.

Then, in 1924, he was told that *Glavlit* (the censorship) would not allow the book to be published in the Soviet Union. In view of this, he declined all proposals, including proposals from Grzebin and Petropolis, for a Russian-language edition abroad.[6] In 1927, that is, two years before Volin started his campaign, fragments of *We* had appeared in the Prague Social-Revolutionary journal *Volya Rossii*, in a version translated back into Russian from Czech, but this had been entirely without Zamyatin's permission. As soon as he heard of it he asked Ehrenburg to protest on his behalf to the editors of *Volya Rossii*, but they refused to stop printing it.

The whole campaign against Zamyatin, therefore, was based on a slander. Volin's false accusation that he had deliberately had his novel published abroad by emigrés was merely one of the pretexts for a wholesale purge of the All-Russian Union of Writers. Zamyatin concludes his letter as follows:

> Thus first there was a condemnation and only then an investigation. I imagine that no court in the world has ever heard of such a procedure. . . . A meeting of the Moscow branch of the All-Russian Union of Writers, without waiting for my explanations, or even expressing a desire to hear them, adopted a resolution condemning my 'act'. The general meeting of the Leningrad branch was called on 22 September and I know of its results only through the newspapers. . . . From these it is evident that in Leningrad my explanations had been read and that here the opinion of those present was divided. A number of the writers, after my explanations, considered the whole incident closed. But the majority found it more prudent to condemn my 'act'. Such was the act of the All-Russian Union of Writers and from this act I draw my conclusions: to belong to a literary organisation which, even indirectly, takes part in the persecution of a co-member, is impossible for me, and I hereby announce my withdrawal from the All-Russian Union of Writers.

The reaction of the new leadership of the Union to this letter adds a final grotesque touch. Both the Moscow and the Leningrad branches issued statements in which they admitted the accuracy of Zamyatin's facts. But instead of withdrawing the charge against him, they went on to take him to task for not retracting the views expressed in his novel, for not renouncing it. This was made a condition for his re-entry into the ranks of Soviet writers. 'If', to quote the editorial comment of *Literary Gazette*, 'Zamyatin arrogantly persists in his mistakes, then the last threads binding him to Soviet society will be broken'.

As we know, Zamyatin himself broke these threads two years later by emigrating from the Soviet Union.

---

[5] The passages here are taken from the translation in Max Eastman's *Artists in Uniform* (London, 1934), which contains an excellent account of the case.

[6] The Russian version eventually appeared in New York in 1952.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Sincerity and Intuitive Writing

VORONSKY AND PEREVAL

Edward J. Brown

EMINENT Soviet writers have recently alluded to the 'insincerity' of much Soviet writing and have suggested that the readers of patterned and didactic novels on socialist construction may be bored rather than instructed. To those familiar with the work of Aleksander Voronsky, much of this 'self-criticism' has an old and familiar ring. When Ehrenburg pointed out that it would have been impossible for any agency to 'order' the production of *Anna Karenina*, he seemed to be echoing Voronsky, who thirty years earlier had argued long and cogently that literature cannot be created by directive, and, in desperation more than anger, satirised the efforts then being made to administer literary affairs in the same way that the party administered transport and trade.

At a meeting of the Executive Board of the Union of Writers held in August 1954, Alexey Surkov, then Secretary of the Board, spoke in severely negative terms of a number of literary works that had appeared during the first warm days of the thaw. He maintained that their authors were in many cases reviving the principle of 'intuitivism', and seeking to deprive literature of its active part in socialist construction. V. Pomerantsev, author of the article 'On Sincerity in Literature', had advanced the idea, according to Surkov, that the main criterion in judging the work of literature should be *sincerity*, that is, as Surkov interpreted it, the 'immediacy of things'. Surkov maintained that this was a direct echo of the platform of *Pereval*, a group of writers associated in the twenties with Voronsky, who insisted on the importance of non-rational factors such as 'intuition' and 'immediate impressions' in the creation of literature. Surkov of course deplored this revival 'in our conditions' of ideas inspired by sources hostile to the party programme.[1]

Aleksander Voronsky (1884–1943), the most sensitive and genuine of Soviet critics of the twenties, belonged to the group of communist intellectuals who supported Trotsky and opposed Stalin. According to a recent survey of literary trends in the twenties, Voronsky belonged to the Trotskyite opposition from 1925 to 1927.[2] He was a courageous man whose opposition, at first clear and sharp, may have been ill-concealed even after Stalin's control of the party was established. When the opposition was defeated in 1927, Voronsky was arrested and sent into exile with other members of that group. After a formal recantation he was permitted to return to Moscow in 1930, where he continued to write; he worked as an editor in the State Publishing House, but was never again prominent as a critic. He was arrested again in 1935 and, according to the 1958 edition of the *Small Soviet Encyclopedia*, died in 1943. No details of his death have been published, but it probably occurred in prison or in a labour camp. His name has been posthumously cleared of criminal charges, though the influence he exerted on Soviet literature is still described as heterodox and harmful.[3]

The debt which Soviet literature owes to Voronsky is very great. He deserves more credit than any other person for the literary revival which took place during the twenties. As a party assignment he edited the magazine *Krasnaya nov* from 1921 to 1927. This magazine carried important essays on history, economics, and politics along with a generous assortment of contemporary poetry and fiction. The publication was a Soviet version of the so-called 'fat' journals which served the Russian intelligentsia during the nineteenth century. As an editor Voronsky soon earned the suspicion of 'proletarian' literary groups; and the reason would seem to be that the criteria he followed

[1] Reported in *Literaturnaya gazeta*, 17 August 1954.

[2] V. Ivanov, in *Znamya*, Nos. 5 and 6, 1958.

[3] The facts concerning Voronsky are contained in the article noted above, as well as in G. Glinka, *Na perevale, sbornik proizvedenii pisatelei gruppy Pereval* (New York, 1954).

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in the selection of stories and poems for publication tended to be literary rather than social or political. The result of his policy was that non-communist and non-proletarian intellectuals were able to make their contribution to Soviet literature. Rigid dogmatists attacked him as a fool or a traitor because he had opened the pages of the Soviet press to an 'alien' element. In the course of a long and bitter controversy, Voronsky examined his position and that of his opponents, presented an analysis of the nature and function of imaginative literature, and defended his own activities, always with courage and sometimes with patient scorn.

VORONSKY was, during most of his adult life, an active Marxist revolutionary, and his ideas about the nature and function of literature developed at first within the framework of Marxist thought. The defence of his own liberal publishing policy he based on the writings of Belinsky and Plekhanov, both acceptable in the Soviet Union of the twenties as authorities on literary questions, and in his polemic with the organisers of art he restated certain ideas that had long been current in the Russian Marxist milieu. These ideas are still recognisably Hegelian, even after having been filtered through the thought of Belinsky, Plekhanov, and finally Voronsky.

Voronsky maintained, first of all, that art provides knowledge of the world in the form of sensible images. The artist, the scientist, and the philosopher are alike in that they all deal with 'reality'; but while the scientist investigates and analyses its nature, and the philosopher generalises about it, the artist presents his knowledge of reality in the vesture of sensible form. Philosophy and science offer their truths primarily to the mind, art to the sensuous nature of man, but what both offer is truth. It followed from this that any genuine work of literature, though conditioned by the social origin of the writer and the historical period in which he lived, has an objective value as 'cognition of life'. And Voronsky pointed out —as in that time it was necessary to point out— that the great literature of the past, though it may have been the product of slave-owners or feudal lords, was a revelation of human experience, and as such a permanent possession of all mankind, including the Russian proletariat. The works of supposedly 'bourgeois' social origin which he published in *Krasnaya nov* should be judged, therefore, by their value as artistic products first of all, rather than as social commentary or propaganda. And the aesthetic value of a work of art depends, he maintained, upon the validity of the images presented in it, their faithfulness to the nature of that which is portrayed.[4]

Voronsky's basic views do no offence to Marxist ideology, and need not have troubled the state. Indeed he carefully eschewed any claim to a possibly dangerous originality in propagating such views, maintaining that he was a more orthodox Marxist than were his opponents, the champions of 'proletarian hegemony' in art. Many of the most important political figures of the day supported him in this contention, among them Trotsky and the Commissar for Education, Lunacharsky.

But to those government figures who saw in literature and art only weapons to be used in the service of the state, Voronsky's activities both as editor and as critic seemed close to treason. Averbakh, one of the leaders of the proletarian literary movement, was one of the first to observe that though Voronsky protested his innocence of unorthodox views, he 'seemed to find the Marxist uniform too tight and close-fitting'. Indeed an ideological uniform, whatever its colour, would not have fitted Voronsky, and Averbakh was no doubt correct in his observation that the critic sometimes introduced into literary discussion ideas which lacked adequate Marxist sanction, often enough leaving them unrefuted. There was a disturbing tendency in Voronsky to range freely over literary topics and to entertain ideas from a variety of sources. He maintained to the end that he was a Marxist; yet he valued the Indian philosopher Rabindranath Tagore, who was not; he he had studied Freud, and acknowledged the Freudian contribution to the understanding of

[4] Voronsky's views were presented in a series of articles in the magazine *Krasnaya nov*, most of which were later published in book form. The following volumes are most important: *Iskusstvo i zhizn*; *sbornik statei* (Moscow, 1924); *Na styke*; *sbornik statei* (Moscow 1923); *Literaturnye zapisi* (Moscow, 1926); *Literaturnye tipi* (Moscow, 1927); *Iskusstvo videt mir* (Moscow 1927).

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the unconscious; he had certainly read Bergson; he drew upon Tolstoy for insights into the nature of artistic creation; his reminiscences of his own childhood suggest the possible influence of Proust; and at the same time he could confute his opponents, if need be, by citing texts from Belinsky, Marx, and Plekhanov. The dogmatists were right to distrust him.

Views that seemed heterodox crept into Voronsky's literary essays whenever he attempted to explain the process of artistic creation, though he always maintained that there was Marxist precedent for those views. The behaviour of the artist was to him rather mysterious, not fully explicable in terms of conscious rational purpose. While his polemical articles stressed the role of literature as knowledge, and made confident use of Belinsky's definition of the artist as one who 'thinks in images', his theoretical essays explored the possibility of unconscious psychological processes in the creation of art. He concluded that something he could only call 'intuition' was an essential part of this process. In propagating such a view Voronsky was, in the jargon of Bolshevism, out of tune with his epoch. Such words as 'creativity', 'inspiration', 'intuition', were suspect in the Soviet literary lexicon of the twenties, as indeed they are now, for it was feared that such concepts smacked of bourgeois mentality. The idea was widely accepted that the new literature would be, not 'created' but 'produced', by verbal craftsmen cognisant of the facts of life and instructed in Marxist ideology. Their products would be so fashioned as to satisfy the 'social demands' of the socialist epoch. The *Left Front of Art*, the organisation of the Futurists, contended that the highest form of literary creation was good factual reporting, and that in the dynamic present the daily newspaper had already taken the place of the great epics of former ages. The *Left Front* was no doubt extreme; but there were other groups which spoke of the central importance of 'device', literary technique and method, and still others presented a theory of literature as the 'making of artifacts'. The 'constructivists' spoke of a planned literature, wherein the verbal material would be 'loaded' with the latest scientific and technical connotations. Eager bureaucrats in the literary field suggested that the party, when drawing up a resolution on collectivisation, for instance, should add a final point directing that a certain quantity of poetry and prose on the given topic be 'ordered'. With the adoption of the first Five-Year Plan in 1928 it became official doctrine that literary men must devote their talents to propagandising the plan 'in great works of art'. The idea that artistic production, both collective and individual, could be directed by a rational plan received wide acceptance in the Soviet Union of the twenties.

AGAINST this current Voronsky argued that intuition, an activity independent of rational intention, was basic to the artistic process. He defined intuition as the sum of knowledge which we have arrived at without conscious analytic investigation. Such knowledge is not 'contrary to reason', but may consist of truths discovered by the human reason in former generations, and stored in the subconscious. These intuitive truths reveal themselves in the consciousness of the artist suddenly, unaccountably, and often contrary to plan. To illustrate his thought Voronsky quoted a passage from Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*, where the painter Mikhailov finds that an accidental smear on one of the figures in a drawing gave him a sudden insight into his picture not revealed to experiment and analysis. From Tolstoy Voronsky borrowed the phrase 'removal of veils' to characterise the process of artistic creation. In moments of freedom from the control of his rational ego, the artist is receptive to 'direct, childlike impressions', and, 'removing the veils' from the real world, is able to see it as it is. Shortly before the end of his career as an editor, Voronsky developed the idea that reality is deformed by our conscious cerebral processes, the purpose of which is not to *know* but to *use*, and that the artist, by shedding his social integument, recovers fresh and unspoiled images of a world which is beautiful in itself.

It is obvious that Voronsky could lay no claim to originality as a theorist of aesthetic experience. Of course he never identified the main sources of his ideas on the intuitive activity of the artist, for they were suspect. It was eagerly pointed out, however, that he had an affinity with Kantian aesthetics and that he was

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

indebted to both Freud and Jung; and a major article in the magazine *Literature and Art* in 1930 'unmasked' Voronsky as a follower of Bergson, which he may indeed have been.[5] Yet Voronsky claimed to be a Marxist, a title generally denied him not only by Soviet historians, but by some western intellectuals who have admired his work. He maintained that his ideas on the importance of subconscious factors in art were quite consonant with Marxist philosophy, and had indeed been discussed by Plekhanov. If we conclude that his position is inconsistent with Marxism, it can only be that we accept a rigid definition of what a Marxist is. Voronsky did not regard Marxist philosophy as a closed and complete system of beliefs, and he reached out into the stream of western culture for ideas in areas not explored by the founders of Marxism, such as psychology and aesthetics. Voronsky was a Marxist; but he was also a man of great intellectual range and wide human interest, and as such he has never been acceptable to those Soviet authorities on Marxism who tend to convert it into a set of dogmas.

Along with Voronsky the group of young writers who had looked to him for support and encouragement were castigated in the official press of the early thirties, and passed over in silence for two decades. Some of them were imprisoned or exiled for criminally subversive activities. (One of these, Ivan Kataev, was, like Voronsky, posthumously cleared of such charges in 1956, and a new edition of his collected works was published in 1957.)

Pereval, as the group was called, means literally 'a narrow pass over a mountain range', and is usually translated as *Defile*, or *Pass*. By their choice of the name the *Pereval* writers dramatised their own view as to the transitory nature of the reality they were describing. The Soviet state of the twenties was not, for them, a static and established fact, but a moment in human development, and they viewed their time as a difficult journey towards new horizons. Perhaps 'The Frontier' suggests, in American English at least, the overtones of meaning suggested by the word *Pereval*.

The writers of *Pereval* proclaimed their devotion to the revolution and their intention to work for its aims. More than half of them were, in 1925, members of the *Communist Party*[6]; but they insisted that the individual writer must find his own social content and work out his own style, and so the group issued no directives and announced no programme, confining itself in public to general statements favouring such unexceptionable qualities as 'sincerity' and 'artistic realism', and deploring the prevalence of literary stereotypes. Their statements of belief and policy, though cast in the apocalyptic revolutionary jargon of the twenties, declare that the writer as such must be free of programmes and parties. Certain recurrent ideas and phrases in their public declarations betray a close relationship to Voronsky: they reiterate the special importance of the writer's 'inner world', of his subconscious, and of intuition in the literary process; and they emphasise the primary importance for the writer, not of 'the party spirit', but of 'the human spirit'.

THIS quality of humanism was admired by their friends and severely questioned by their political foes. There was a danger that the direct portrayal of real human situations might suggest to the unwary reader the inadequacy of certain desirable political stereotypes; 'class enemies' sometimes emerged in their stories as complex human beings on familiar terms with suffering and death, while workers and peasants might be portrayed as culturally or morally underprivileged. The *perevaltsy* were not—as their enemies sometimes claimed—engaged in conscious sabotage of the official ideology; but it is a fact that the images of reality which appeared in their stories and poems were presented as the product, not of conscious cerebration but of 'immediate impressions', and it might have been difficult for the thoughtful reader to make those images fit the vulgar folklore of the state.

Voronsky's influence in this respect is written large in the work of the *perevaltsy*. His sympathetic interest in human beings, regardless of party, is evident in his autobiographical works, in his literary essays, and especially in a casual

[5] Raissa Messer, 'Estetika Bergsona i shkola Voronskovo', *Literatura i iskusstvo*, January 1930.

[6] N. L. Brodskii and others, *Literaturnye manifesty ot simvolistov k oktiabryu* (1929), p. 272.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

article he wrote in 1920 about a chance meeting with a former member of the Social-Revolutionary Party who had once violently opposed the Bolsheviks. This article, which makes certain political assumptions and contains definite political judgments, reveals at the same time Voronsky's zest for understanding human situations. He manages to convey the bitterness of the old man's opposition to Bolshevism, his defeat and destitution, and the fear of complete disillusionment with 'the cause of socialism' which had brought him to embrace the Soviet state. Voronsky displays such power of emphatic writing that in his account pathos touches not only the converted Social-Revolutionary but even the Bolsheviks, themselves caught in the general tragedy.[7]

Probably the most original of the *Pereval* writers, and a skilful practitioner of 'Voronskyite humanism', was Ivan Kataev, and the best of his stories is one called 'Milk', published in 1930 and immediately singled out for special disfavour by the editors of *Pravda*, who regarded with suspicion Kataev's protrayal of a 'class enemy' as a sympathetic character. The story is told in the words of a Soviet organiser whose job it is to set up dairying collectives and who has just eliminated a clique of 'kulaks' from control of a dairying community near Moscow. But the organiser, nicknamed 'the Calf', either because of a certain softness in him or because he had raised the norms for calving in his district, he's not sure which, is disturbed by what has happened. He had grown quite fond of the leading kulak, a Baptist named Nilov, a handsome, intelligent, and highly civilised peasant, the most efficient dairyman he had ever met and also a kind of Tolstoyan religious philosopher who spoke persuasively about that 'great unifying force, the universal milk of love and brotherhood'. Such was the power and prestige of Nilov in the district that the efforts of the 'poor and middle' peasants to dislodge him from control at first got nowhere. But during a crucial meeting there occurred a sudden act of violence—quite unconnected with politics—against Nilov's son, who was brutally attacked by a personal enemy. The peasants thereupon turned against Nilov, dismissed him from the executive board, and installed a 'committee of the poor and middle peasants'. The peasant mass appears in the story as primitive and inarticulate: 'Our peasants don't have any respect for bad luck', says the thoughtful organiser, 'and a man who's unlucky will never get their trust. You see, as long as you're strong and healthy, they'll honour you and believe in you and trust you. But just as soon as you slip a little they're disgusted with you'.

Such was Ivan Kataev's contribution, in the critical year for collectivisation of 1930, to the literature which described that development. The narrator had not only expressed interest and sympathy for the kulak Nilov, but ended his story on a questioning note: 'Lord! How dark and confused everything still is! You can't find clear boundaries or sharp lines anywhere . . . You can't understand the beginning or the end . . . and men and their lives are devoured in the torrent . . . It can't be helped. But still it's chilling and frightening'.

Kataev's 'Heart', published in 1928, is a story in a similar vein; the hero is a communist functionary who has abandoned the various hammer and sickle stereotypes, whether of language or manner, in favour of simple human speech and natural behaviour. Like the narrator in 'Milk', he has a spot of softness in him, and is not impervious to feelings of compassion. There is more than a suspicion that Kataev is attempting in this and other stories to portray an alternative to the image of the Bolshevik as a 'man of steel'.

EIGHT collections of stories were published by the *Pereval* group between 1922 and 1932, when all autonomous literary groups were liquidated.[8] Among the contributors were a number of young writers whose talents have, in many cases, been lost to Soviet literature. In these stories the locale is frequently the small provincial town or the distant village, and the inhabitants of these places are portrayed with the prescribed 'artistic realism', but sometimes with a distinct undertone of moral horror.

[7] A. K. Voronskii, 'Po povodu odnoi vstrechi', *Iskusstvo i zhizn'*, p. 219.

[8] Sborniki *Pereval*, Nos. 1–6 (Moscow, 1922–28); *Rovesniki*, No. 7 (Moscow, 1930); *Rovesniki*, No. 8 (Moscow 1932).

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Yekaterina Strogovaya's 'Country Woman' deals with the working people in a provincial manufacturing town. The characters and events are presented with no attempt to organise the material according to any preconceived social thesis. The style is harshly and laconically realistic. Ostensibly, the story concerns 'survivals of the old way of life' and the activity of 'anti-social elements', the work of the party cell and the factory committees; all the material for a tendentious social treatment is present, but somehow the thesis never appears. The peasant women now become town workers are illiterate, ignorant, savagely bigoted and ready to persecute a fellow-worker who has lost favour with the group. They are gossip-mongers who poison life with suspicion and hatred. A young girl is ostracised because of a rumour about 'a rich kulak uncle', though she and her family are destitute. A girl of masculine build and manners is driven out as a 'half-and-half'. And through the fog of meanness and stupidity one can see moving about and occasionally having an effect such strange organisms as 'woman-sec' (*zhenatdely*), 'partcell' (*partyacheiki*), and the people from something called the 'fac-commit' (*fabzavkom*).

Boris Guber's 'Corpses' gives a striking picture of the melancholy aimlessness of life in the deep provinces. The heroes of his story, two country schoolmasters, are Gogolian grotesques of vacant boredom. Sleep, adventure stories, and vodka fill their free time. They have forgotten how to want anything or to do anything. One of them cannot manage to finish a letter, and in several false starts makes deliberate semi-literate spelling mistakes.

In the writing of many of the *perevaltsy* we are made vividly conscious of the elemental, savage, and desperately poor villages of the deep interior, an aspect of Russian life which seems to have escaped the attention of the nineteenth-century writers, who, with some few exceptions, idealised the Russian folk—and which, of course, is not emphasised in Soviet literature either. As one unfriendly critic of the thirties put it, their stories of village life demonstrate the triumph of 'biology' over 'sociology', of primitive instinct over the forces of reason.

THUS in their stories, as in their critical thinking, the *perevaltsy* tended to lay stress on areas of human experience not easily susceptible to rational explanation or control. If leanings in that direction had been confined to a small splinter group, the authorities might not have been disturbed; however, the writers and critics of *Pereval* commanded respect in the literary world, and their ideas and their manner of writing spread like an infection even into the proletarian literary organisation. Ideas identified as 'Voronskyite' began to appear, after Voronsky had left the scene, in the critical articles published by the leaders of Averbakh's organisation, the Russian Association of Proletarian Writers (RAPP) and the Association was severely taken to task for this. These ideas often appeared in vulgar form, but there could be no doubt of their origin. Thus Voronsky's 'removal of veils' (*snyatie pokrovov*) became 'the tearing off of masks' (*sryvanie masok*); and his phrase 'immediate impressions' was used by Libedinsky in a statement of the proletarian platform in literature. The humanism of *Pereval* was expressed in the slogan 'For the Living Man in Literature', a call to treat human beings as complex psychological structures. This curious development, in which the sworn enemies of Voronsky and *Pereval* had begun to echo their favourite notions, was described in ironic terms by Lezhnev, a critic associated with the *Pereval* group:

> Time has shown that we were right after all. The principles of *Pereval* have been embraced by those who fought against them most bitterly. . . . These principles are being put out now by a new firm, under a new label. Many people seriously think that the idea of the necessity for psychological analysis, the idea of 'the living man' . . . or the thesis that we must do battle with stereotypes or mere sketches for the sake of a more realistic art—that all of these things were advanced by the Association of Proletarian Writers. But *Pereval*, of course, has never taken out a patent on its own ideas.[9]

Imagined or real, the dangers presented by *Pereval* attracted the attention of leading organs of the party and press to the group in 1930. When attacks were published, the *perevaltsy*

[9] As quoted in G. Glinka, op. cit., p. 26.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

demanded a hearing, and a public debate was held in Moscow in May 1930. The published record of this event, though written from a partisan point of view and unfriendly to the *perevaltsy*, shows that the latter defended themselves with spirit against a succession of slanderous attacks on their Marxism, their loyalty, and their honesty.[10] A second discussion was held at the Communist Academy, the upshot of which was a resolution, published in May 1930, condemning among other things their 'humanistic phraseology'. The language of the resolution marks a stage in the evolution of the Stalinist intellectual pattern:

> The use of humanistic phrases is one manifestation of the vacillation and panic experienced by certain intermediate petty-bourgeois and intellectual groups, who, unable to keep up with the rush of events, cannot find their place in the ranks of the fighters for socialism.[11]

[10] *Na literaturnom postu*, No. 9, May 1930, p. 103.
[11] *Literaturnaya gazeta*, 19 May 1930.

After the dissolution of all literary groups in 1932, *Pereval* disappeared as a separate entity, though a number of writers who had belonged to the group continued to write, even satisfying, occasionally, the socialist-realist 'demand of the epoch'. From the middle thirties and until 1954 there were, as far as the present writer can determine, only occasional references either to *Pereval* or Voronsky, and these couched in vituperative terms. It is especially interesting to note, therefore, that the spokesman of the Soviet Union of Writers, Surkov, sensed in some of the post-Stalin critical writing—especially where it spoke of sincerity, directness, the immediacy of impressions—a recrudescence of long-silent thoughts. The party is still vigilant against any autonomous, unorganised activity on the part of its writers. Yet it may be that the current of humanism associated with the name of Voronsky and *Pereval* has not dried up, but will again appear as a major force in Soviet literature.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Zoshchenko's Unfinished Novel

'BEFORE SUNRISE'

Hugh McLean

BY one means or another, by subterfuge and camouflage, books were written and published in the Soviet Union, even during the Stalin era, which show the spark of true creativity, which, however fumblingly, attempted to find new forms for conveying new reflections on various aspects of human experience. One such book was Mikhail Zoshchenko's *Before Sunrise* (*Pered voskhodom solntsa*), two instalments of which appeared in the magazine *Oktiabr* in the autumn of 1943. Unfortunately, both Russian and Western literary scholars have failed to take adequate account of this remarkable work. The Russians, of course, were prohibited from doing so. After two instalments of *Before Sunrise* had appeared, its publication was stopped and the author subjected to a series of abusive political attacks, obviously inspired by the highest authorities; and since that time, thaw or not, there has been no sign of reversing the decision. *Before Sunrise* is still under a ban in Soviet Russia and seems likely to remain so. On the other hand, Western students of Soviet literature have largely contented themselves with rehearsing the unpleasant facts connected with its suppression, retrospectively interpreting this display of ideological whip-cracking even during the relatively liberal war period as a premonition of the still harsher fate which awaited Zoshchenko and others in the Zhdanov era after the war. But the book has not been treated *in extenso*; the present article is an attempt to initiate such a discussion.[1]

[1] The most extensive Western study of Zoshchenko to my knowledge is Rebecca A. Domar's useful article, 'The Tragedy of a Soviet Satirist: The Case of Zoshchenko', in *Through the Glass of Soviet Literature*, ed. Ernest J. Simmons (New York, 1953). Miss Domar cites all the official Soviet attacks on *Before Sunrise*, but does not discuss it herself, except to imply disapproval of its frankness in sexual matters. Gleb Struve, in *Soviet Russian Literature, 1917–50* (1951), discusses *Before Sunrise* succinctly and with discernment, but in my opinion underestimates its literary value.

Zoshchenko calls *Before Sunrise* a *povest* (novella), a term which usually signifies a work of narrative fiction of a length somewhere between the short story and the novel. But as we read the text, we may doubt the appropriateness of this classification, both with respect to its character as fiction in general and its genre in particular.

The first question, is it fiction, is a thorny one for all literature, and particularly so for this work, in which the relation between *Dichtung* and *Wahrheit* is more than usually intimate. If this is fiction, it is fiction on the borderline of autobiography. Not only is the narrative presented in the first person, but the 'I' is explicitly identified with the author himself. For instance, in the prologue, 'I' announces, 'Ten years ago I wrote a story called *Youth Restored*'; and it is a fact that in 1933 Mikhail Zoshchenko did indeed publish a book with this title. Innumerable other details coincide with known facts of Zoshchenko's own biography. Therefore, if the narrator is a fictional character, he is in many verifiable respects a fictional shadow of the historical Zoshchenko. The further question of whether the narrator's *private* experiences are also Zoshchenko's cannot be answered at this point; for this we would need extra-literary documentation not now available. But for our present purpose the problem of historical truth may be disregarded and the autobiographical element in *Before Sunrise* considered only from the point of view of its literary function.

IT would appear that for artistic purposes of his own Zoshchenko is deliberately underlining the literature-life relationship, in fact attempting to erase the borderline between the two. Although this is a work of literature, he wants it taken seriously as a human document, a statement about life, and he therefore presents what he says as confession rather than invention. This device of apparently equating

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a lyric hero with a real author is of course an ancient strategem in the literary world; it was a trademark of the Romantics, though they did not invent it.

As a matter of fact, throughout his literary career Zoshchenko had been fond of toying with the ambiguous relationship between the two planes, manipulating and often deliberately confusing them to achieve various effects. One of the devices is the use of a character labelled 'the author', who may belong to either plane. Many of Zoshchenko's satirical pieces, especially from the 1920s, contain stray musings about life and the world which are presented as informal colloquies between the author and his readers; but the naïve substance and unliterary language of these digressions often seem to imply that the true author is hiding behind a mask of irony. In a collection of *povesti* called *Sentimental Tales* (1929) Zoshchenko lays bare this device, directing ironic attention to the literary trick itself. The book contains three prefaces, supposedly to three successive editions. The first two are signed by the putative author, one I. V. Kolenkorov, who expresses his gratitude to 'the well-known writer Mikhail Zoshchenko' for his assistance in putting the tales into final form. In the third preface the assistant comes out from behind the scenes and announces:

> In view of previous misunderstandings the author informs his critics that the person who tells these stories is, so to speak, an imaginary figure. He represents that middling type of intellectual who happened to live on the borderline between two epochs. We were forced to endow this upstart of ours, Mr. I. V. Kolenkorov, with such things as neurasthenia, ideological waverings, gross contradictions, and melancholy. The author himself, the writer M. M. Zoshchenko, is, it is true, the son and the brother of such unhealthy people, but he has long since surmounted all that. And at the present time he has no contradictions. And if occasionally he may lack complete peace of mind, it is for entirely different reasons, which the author will tell about sometime later. In this instance it is a literary device. And the author implores his respected critics to recall this important circumstance before they open fire on a defenceless writer.

Of course even here the device is not truly bare, since the irony still undercuts any statements about M. M. Zoshchenko. He may have dropped the mask of Kolenkorov, but we may well wonder whether the new face that confronts us, though labelled Zoshchenko, is really that of the author of the book.

In *Before Sunrise*, however, quite the opposite effect is sought. Here there is no mask of irony, no wisecracks, nothing to break the illusion of the identity of the author and the narrator. In fact every effort is made to intensify it. In one instance this involves a very different use of exactly the same structural device which in *Sentimental Tales* was used to break the illusion—a preface in which the author discusses the genesis and structure of the work itself with the reader. In *Sentimental Tales* the ambiguous, bantering tone of the prefaces had only increased the uncertainty about the author's true identity; but here, in *Before Sunrise*, the tone is straightforward and sincere, the language standard literary Russian. This author tells us that after being evacuated from Leningrad to Alma Ata in 1941, he had decided after much soul-searching to continue this work, conceived and begun long before the outbreak of war, even though it seemed superficially to contribute nothing to the national struggle for survival. He had concluded that his work ultimately represented an affirmation of the forces of civilisation against the barbarism of fascism, and he therefore decided to write and publish it anyway.

After this somewhat apologetic Preface, which may have been partly designed to anticipate the charges of 'raking about in one's own soul in the midst of a national holocaust' (which were actually levelled against *Before Sunrise*), Zoshchenko continues his description of the nature of the work in a Prologue which follows the Preface. The book is to be an account of the author's explorations in the realm of psychological theory, and in particular an exposition of the procedure by means of which he had 'freed himself from many unnecessary discontents and become happy'. In this remark we may suspect an element of the familiar Zoshchenko irony: the claim seems too optimistic to be taken at face value. But if it is ironic, the irony is not developed in the rest of the work, at least in so far as it was published.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Another function of both Preface and Prologue is to provide the basis for the logical organisation of the work. This logical, rather than narrative, structure is another reason why *povest* seems hardly the appropriate designation. For this work has the shape, not of the narrative at all, but of a treatise. It is an exposition of a theory with (narrated) illustrative data. As in any scientific treatise, a theory is stated, logically derived, and demonstrated by reference to case material. To be sure, the theory is presented in the form of a historical account of how it arose from the data, rather than reorganised according to the logical structure of the theory itself. But the form is still essentially expository, though with a narrative bias.

IN his intermingling of truth and fiction, of narrative method and scientific exposition, Zoshchenko was actually trying to solve what was for him a serious artistic problem. He was searching for a new literary form more appropriate to twentieth-century needs than the narrative modes perfected in the nineteenth. One of the first products of this quest had been the work to which he refers as the predecessor and analogue of *Before Sunrise,* namely, *Youth Restored.* Here, too, Zoshchenko had expounded a scientific subject, senescence and the possibilities of preventing it. Here, too, the structure had been expository rather than narrative: a preface in which the problem is introduced and pondered at considerable length, then a narrative (not in this case in the first person) allegedly illustrating the experience of rejuvenation, and finally an elaborate apparatus of commentaries containing further illustrative and analytical material on the general subject of old age, its causes and cure.

In the Prologue to *Before Sunrise,* Zoshchenko refers back to this earlier work, calling it 'an ordinary novella'. But it was one to which 'commentaries were attached—studies of a physiological character', and consequently *Youth Restored* had been taken as a serious treatise by 'men of science', who

> treated my work with special attention. There were many debates. Arguments took place. I heard many sharp words. But there were also words of approbation . . . I even began to receive invitations to the sessions of the 'Institute of the Brain'. And Ivan Petrovich Pavlov invited me to his 'Wednesdays'.

But, Zoshchenko insists, 'I had not written my work for science. It was a literary work, and the scientific material was only a component part of it'.

Before Sunrise is to be similar in conception, with the substitution of psychology for physiology. Scientific notions are utilised as component parts of a new literary form which the author, perhaps for lack of a better word, had called by an old name, the *povest.* But when in the Prologue the author's interlocutor (a remarkable physiologist) asks him whether *Before Sunrise* is to be a treatise or a novel, he replies, somewhat less specifically, that it is a 'literary work'.

> Science will enter into it as history sometimes enters into a novel.
> Will there again be commentaries?
> No. It will be a single whole. Just as a gun and a shell can be one whole.

Though similar to some extent in formal conception, *Before Sunrise* differs markedly from *Youth Restored* in one respect: the absence of irony, plus the personally poignant character of much of the material, seem to imply that this is one work by Zoshchenko which can be taken 'straight'. One is not inclined to suspect, as one so often is in *Youth Restored,* that the whole thing may be an elaborate spoof.

The transition from an explanation of how and why the work happened to be written, to the work itself, takes place imperceptibly in the course of the following section, entitled 'I Am Unhappy and Don't Know Why'. The author tells us that all his life he had been a victim of depression. At first, in his adolescence, he had considered this a sign of natural superiority: all sensitive, artistic natures were melancholy. But later experiences in the war, the revolution, and as a writer in post-revolutionary Russia, had taught him the error of this view. First of all, he found that not all depressed people are interesting: the gloomiest man he ever met—one who attempted suicide at least twice a year—was a banal and empty-headed bore who never thought of anything but food, money, and women. And he likewise discovered that by no means all talented and interesting people are depressed. Like an earlier anatomist of melancholy, he turned to his library, wondering what

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

others had thought about his problem. While he found—and cites for our benefit—many kindred spirits among the writers of the past ('Twenty times a day the pistol comes to my mind. And then with that thought I feel better', Nekrasov wrote to Turgenev in 1857), still, many great men had not experienced anything of the kind. There was no generic explanation for this melancholy; it must be private and personal. The author was a humorist whose stories made people laugh, but the laughter 'was in my books . . . not in my heart'. He decided to seek its cause, especially after a particularly devastating depressive attack which occurred in the autumn of 1926.

> Suddenly I understood clearly that the cause of my unhappiness was concealed in my life. There was no doubt: something had happened, something had taken place that had had an oppressive effect on me.
>
> But what? What had happened? And how could I search for this unhappy event? How could I find the cause of my anguish?
>
> Then I thought: I must recollect my life.

This point may be taken as the completion of the introductory frame which provides the structural underpinning—logical or expository—of the work. The author is now going to recollect the most emotionally charged experiences of his life, with the aim of finding a historical explanation for his depression and even a means for curing it.

THE third section, 'Fallen Leaves'—a title borrowed from V. V. Rozanov, the most eloquent earlier exponent of psycho-sexual theories in Russian literature—begins the artistic core of the work, the presentation of recollections in the form of ultra-short stories, often only a paragraph or two in length, yet each constituting a single narrative whole. He decides to begin at the age of sixteen, ostensibly from the belief that nothing of great psychological significance could happen to anyone before then. The stories are arranged in chronological groups: eleven from 1912 to 1915, sixteen from 1915 to 1917, seventeen from 1917 to 1920, and eighteen from 1920 to 1926.

These stories represent a *tour de force* of narrative art. Perhaps the most striking thing about them, other than their extraordinary compression, is their dryness of tone. Once again we are confronted with a kind of paradox. If these stories are indeed taken from the author's most intense emotional recollections, he has performed a miracle of self-detachment in relating them as he does, conveying a vivid *picture* of emotion without quite communicating it, or, as Tolstoy would put it, 'infecting' the reader with it.

Here, for instance, is a 'memory' called 'Torture', translated in its entirety:

> I am lying on the operating table. Under me there is a white, cold oilcloth. In front an enormous window. Beyond the window a bright blue sky.
>
> I have swallowed a crystal of mercuric chloride. I had this crystal for photography. Now they are going to pump out my stomach.
>
> A doctor in a white coat is standing motionless by the table.
>
> The nurse hands him a long rubber tube. Then, taking a glass pitcher, she fills it with water. I watch this procedure with disgust. So they are going to torture me. They should have let me die. At least all my grievances and vexations would end.
>
> I got a '1' [the lowest mark] in Russian composition. Besides the '1' there was an inscription in red ink on the paper: 'Rubbish'. True, it was a composition on a theme from Turgenev, 'Liza Kalitina' [heroine of *A Nest of Gentlefolk*]. What had I to do with her? But all the same it was impossible to endure.
>
> The doctor inserted the rubber hose in my gullet. The disgusting brown tube goes deeper and deeper.
>
> The nurse lifts the pitcher of water. The water pours into me. I gasp for breath. I squirm in the doctor's arms. I wave my arms with a groan, begging them to stop the torture.
>
> 'Gently, gently, young man,' says the doctor. 'Aren't you ashamed? Such lack of nerve, and over such a trifle.'
>
> The water pours out of me like a fountain.

The prose here seems exceptionally bare—unliterary without being especially colloquial or conversational; it is more like the language of thought, of inner reflection, where no literary or rhetorical effects are needed: short sentences, exceedingly simple syntax, almost no dependent

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

clauses. The first three paragraphs are focused —metonymically—on physical objects, not lavishly enumerated, but defined just enough to establish the reality of the operating room. The patient ('I'), the doctor, and the nurse at first appear almost as component parts of the physical setting, stationary and objective. Then the history of the suicide attempt is told, in exactly the same tone as the physical description. Emotion appears only in the fourth paragraph: 'disgust', 'torture', 'Why don't they let me die?'. But even these statements, expressed in the same short, bare sentences, seem to assimilate the same intonation of calm, restrained dryness. The fifth paragraph reverts again to history—the motive for the suicide, a low mark on a literary paper accompanied by an insulting comment. The climax of the 'memory' is now prepared for: the actual pumping of the stomach—the physical setting activated, set in motion like a film. And the crowning moment, the eruption of water from the narrator's stomach, is presented without emotional overtone.

Not all the 'memories' are as intense and personal as this one. Some are only witnessed rather than experienced by the narrator. But all of them, like this one, are actually whole short stories with a coherent narrative structure, a graphic setting, and revealing characterisation, and not only of the narrator himself.

The second group of 'memories' covers the war period, when the author served at the front as a junior officer. Despite the horror, the wounds, and even a gas attack from which he suffered permanent heart damage, he describes this period as relatively free from the spiritual anguish which had made his earlier life so wretched. To be sure, in the beginning he had worried about being a coward in battle, and he had some difficulty in maintaining his dignity and authority with enlisted men—like the historical Zoshchenko, he was not only very young at this time, but very short. But in most of the episodes the trouble is external—the misery is in the world, not in the self. Why this should be so is not explored at this point.

IN both the third and fourth groups of 'memories' the centre of artistic attention also shifts to some extent from the inner to the outer world. There is material here which might be of genuine value to an historian of the period: vivid images of a dislocated and disintegrating society, seen from the vantage point of an incredible variety of places and jobs. 'In three years [1917–20] I changed cities twelve times and professions ten. I was a policeman, a bookkeeper, a cobbler, an instructor in aviculture, a telephone operator for the border patrol, a detective, a court secretary, and a government chief clerk.' After 1920 the 'memories' take on considerable literary-historical value as well, with interesting vignettes of the leading literary personalities of those days—Remizov, Zamyatin, Shklovski, Blok, Esenin, Gorki, Kuzmin, and Mayakovski.

There is also, of course, much material of purely personal significance, some of it highly charged with psychological meaning, sometimes with philosophical overtones as well. A particularly ferocious scene the author witnessed in a zoo evokes one of these rare comments. A bear cub has managed to stick its paw into the next cage, where there are two grown bears, a male and a female. One of them has seized the little bear's paw in its mouth and is worrying it furiously. Screaming in agony, the little bear thrusts another paw through the bars; this is in turn seized by the other adult bear. People run up, shouting and throwing things at the bears. This only excites them more. One of the little bear's paws has now been completely gnawed off and lies on the floor of the cage. At last the keepers succeed in driving off the adult bears, and the little one is led off to be shot. Roaring with excitement, the adult bears copulate. 'And I began to understand', the author concludes, 'what animals are. And what makes them different from people'. But the implication appears to be that they are not different, that people do, or would like to do, the same kind of thing as these bears—a misanthropic note that also lurks in a good deal of Zoshchenko's humorous work.

At the end of the third section the author looks back over the sixty-three memories he has resurrected and finds nothing sufficiently exceptional to explain his extreme deviation from the normal human state. He therefore decides to carry the search further back in time. The fourth section, 'A Terrible World', deals with the period between the ages of five and fifteen. Here

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

we are given thirty-eight memories, not further divided into sections or dated. Though many of them are unpleasant, and some even tragic—for example, the sudden death of his father, preceded by marital difficulties between his parents—still, nothing extraordinary appears, no experience sufficiently appalling to warp a personality for life. Even in childhood the trouble seems to be already present. As his mother says, he is a child with a 'closed heart', incapable of loving. But why this should be so remains a mystery. He decides to explore still further back into the past.

The fifth part bears the same title as the work as a whole, 'Before Sunrise'. First the author actually manages to resurrect twelve scenes from the ages between two and five—scenes even briefer and more compact than the preceding ones. From a literary point of view these infantile memories seem to lead him to a further refinement and compression of his genre, the ultra-short story. Now only a few lines are left, yet somehow they still make up a valid 'story', and effectively recreate the infantile experience. Here is a specimen.

Myself

A plate of kasha. A spoon is moving towards my mouth. Someone's hand is holding the spoon.

I take the spoon away. I am going to feed myself.

I swallow the kasha. It is hot. I roar. In my anger I bang the spoon around the plate. Spatterings of kasha fly into my face and my eyes.

An unbelievable scream. It is me screaming.

The mode of presentation is here pared down still further: details are few, and there is no elaboration. But what is given is sufficient to create a strong visual image which metonymically conveys the emotions of frustration and rage. One also notes the ascription to the infant narrator of an unusual degree of artistic detachment: he separates himself from his own scream, just as the mature author distances himself from the experiences he relates.

BUT even the two-to-five memories do not provide the ultimate clue to the mystery of the author's unhappiness. Attempts to resurrect still earlier memories fail. He is therefore logically driven back to the point where he started. Unaided, he cannot 'remember' the cause of his misfortune. He must therefore seek some other basis for proceeding. From narrative he reverts to exposition. He begins to 'study' psychology, and in the same ostensibly naïve manner rehearses the results of his readings and reflections with readers who are assumed to be ignorant of the subject, though with apologies to the 'enlightened' ones among them who may know it already. First he outlines the Pavlovian theory of conditioned reflexes. Then he tries to apply this theory to his own psychological disorder: somehow a mistaken connection had been established in him. Some fear experienced in infancy had been 'misunderstood' and a reflex association established which caused him to re-experience the fear whenever he received a certain stimulus. The fear was not causally connected with the stimulus originally, but was now irrevocably linked with it in his mind; he was like Pavlov's famous dogs salivating at the ringing of a bell, even when no food appeared afterwards.

He now tries to recover earlier memories by seeking for associative stimuli—for instance, revisiting places where he had lived as a child. These visits did actually evoke some very strong, though obscure, emotions in him, and among other things gave rise to a series of exceedingly vivid and disturbing dreams. The effort to understand these dreams leads him to an investigation of dream theory, and thus, inevitably, he arrives at the name of Freud. He consults some doctors—apparently non-professionally—and among these doctors there were two 'orthodox Freudians'. They offered him ingenious interpretations of his dreams, to which he has the classical 'naïve' reaction (one often feels in this work that it is a kind of 'ontological recapitulation' on Zoshchenko's part of the history of psychological theory in the past half-century): he finds them too obsessed with sex and rejects them with indignation.

He therefore returns to the Burtonian method: a library investigation of the whole subject of dreams and their meaning, extending from ancient philosophy to modern science. His conviction is confirmed that Freud was mistaken in his exclusive concentration on the sexual aspect of things.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

'Black Water', the final section of *Before Sunrise* as we possess it, presents the results of the author's further researches into his infantile life through dream and place associations. He finds a recurrent theme of 'water' associated with various strong feelings and concludes that the apparent attraction to water he had felt during most of his life actually concealed some powerful fears. These, he feels, must have emanated from some other source, through a mistaken connection, a 'bad' conditioned reflex. In the Burtonesque manner he now once again explored his library on the subject of water, searching for the—

> conditioned neural connections which led from water to something unknown, to something, perhaps, still more frightening. Without this, water would not have been a cause of horror. And so, assured of my powers, I set off further in search of this unhappy event.

At this point the publication of *Before Sunrise* was broken off, and we have no clue as to what would have followed. The autobiographical narrative material seems exhausted: there are no more memories to relate, or rather the author has passed the point on his structural framework where he could include any more. It is hard to see how the search for a 'trauma' could be carried much further. Perhaps eventually he would discover, as seems likely from the material, that there was no single trauma, and perhaps he would learn to see through some of the rationalisations apparent in the existing material. It is hard to say. On the other hand, at the beginning of the work he had said that only half of the book would be concerned with his 'own person'; perhaps the rest would be altogether different. For the time being, at least, its nature lies hidden behind that promise, 'To be continued', a promise unfulfilled by decree of the autocratic state.

CUADERNOS

Revista bimestral en lengua española

Director: Julián Gorkin
Secretario: Ignacio Iglesias

Publica en su número 47 (Marzo–Abril 1961):

ADLAI E. STEVENSON: Estados Unidos y América Latina
FERNANDO DIEZ DE MEDINA: De América, la nuestra, y su destino
ALBERTO BAEZA FLORES: Proceso de una revolución frustrada
JOSE BULLEJOS: El pensamiento social de la revolución mexicana
JORGE GUILLEN: A la altura de las circunstancias (Poemas)
CLAUDIO SANCHEZ-ALBORNOZ: Originalidad creadora del Arcipreste
J. RUBIA BARCIA: Reflexiones sobre el ser de la novela

Número suelto: 3 N.F.
Suscripción anual: 15 N.F.

Solicite un ejemplar de muestra a:

CUADERNOS
18, Avenue de l'Opéra
Paris–I°

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

VIEWS AND REVIEWS

POSTSCRIPT ON PASTERNAK

Herbert E. Bowman

THE death of Boris Pasternak in 1960 can be taken to mark the end of an era in Russian literature. At least the chance is great that his work represents the last of the major survivals from a pre-Soviet literary world. For approximately a generation, one might say since the suicide of Mayakovsky in 1930, Soviet authority has imposed its controls upon a literary corporation that could always be suspected of concealing behind its official façade old creative currents of thought and old artistic traditions. But such survival as there has been, both in creation and in men, is surely at the point of becoming an event of the past. By and large, what happens from now on in Soviet literature will have to be viewed as truly indigenous to the Soviet world.

The death of Pasternak could hardly have suggested such significance if he had not succeeded in leaving *Doctor Zhivago* in our hands. His reputation as a poet was of course already secure, but he was a poet for the few. And it is remarkable how outspoken he became in dismissing his earlier work, as when he wrote: 'I would never lift a finger to bring back from oblivion three-fourths of what I have written . . . [*Doctor Zhivago* is] my chief and most important work, the only one I am not ashamed of and for which I can answer with the utmost confidence'.[1] He seems to have been consciously joining that goodly company of Russian authors who have sought to enlarge the role of literary artist into the role of prophet.

Pasternak's quarrel with the editors of *Novy Mir*, the smuggled character of the publication of his novel in the West, the drama of the rejected Nobel Prize, the vast popular reading, or partial reading, of this unexpected consignment from the Soviet Russian world, all conspired to make of the appearance of the work an event in international political life. It is hard to think of another literary work in the whole history of literature that has aroused such a world-wide public stir. Alas, we can never wash the finger marks of politics from anything that comes to us from the Soviet Union. The political repercussions of *Doctor Zhivago* certainly made most of the fame of the book. Even in the years to come, it will remain impossible to read *Doctor Zhivago* with completely undivided attention to it as a work of literary art, as one can read *War and Peace* or *Madame Bovary*.

With such a *cause célèbre* at their disposal, Western critics were urgently obliged to respond with commentaries. The result is that Western commentary upon *Doctor Zhivago* has by this time expanded into a considerable body of critical literature, almost a study in itself. It is in fact becoming increasingly difficult to say anything new about *Doctor Zhivago*, when so much has been said or at least hinted at. But just because so much has been said, the reader of the many reviews becomes anxious, indeed almost belligerently determined, to look again at the central meaning of the book.

If *Doctor Zhivago* could ever manage to clear the hurdles that were set up in the reader's mind by politics, it had another great hurdle to leap. This was the one erected by the knowledge that Pasternak's literary formation goes back to the age of Russian Symbolism and post-Symbolism, and that he is a poet famous for the novelty of his imagery. The very name 'Doctor Zhivago', with its clear reference to 'live' and 'life' in Russian roots, is enough to alert the scrupulous critic to the presence of symbolic meanings and imaginative ambiguities. Similarly the first name Yuri or George (St. George?). Similarly such a name as Evgraf. Lara or Larisa seems perhaps less promising. Unless one manages to discover a St. Larisa and works to make something out of that. Indeed, such a book as this can be made to provide grains for the mills of the most esoteric symbol-chopping.[2] And beyond all the intricate minutiae, the reader cannot

[1] Boris Pasternak, *I Remember; Sketch for an Autobiography*. Translated by David Magarshack (New York, 1959), pp. 121–22.

[2] See Edmund Wilson, et. al., 'Legend and Symbol in *Doctor Zhivago*', *The Nation*, 25 April 1959.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

help but notice the rich symbolic possibilities in the larger meanings of the book. The two women in Yuri Zhivago's life, the wife Tonia and the sweetheart Lara, suggest many possible meanings, all perhaps circling around the image of Lara as the force in Russian life that draws Zhivago—the feminine lure of Russia herself; and the opposite image of Tonia as perhaps the more formal, more Westernising influence in Russian life—Tonia the official wife, who will escape to France in the end. The suspicion, however, that the book may have been intended as a single long parable seems to seek in vain for its justification. Edmund Wilson's argument, written at the beginning of the popular discussion of the novel, that the theme of the whole work is really Death and Resurrection, is never really demonstrated.[3] Wilson leaves us with a few curious hints and presumably hopes that we will fill in the big picture for ourselves.

THE dangers of too much sophistication in the interpretation of the work of literary art could hardly be better illustrated than by the case of *Doctor Zhivago*. What is especially disappointing in so much that has been written is that the major meaning of the book, far below or far beyond political strategy or literary tactics, has inspired so little genuine excitement. It is as if Pasternak had presented us with a gift, a great simple gift, and we spent all our time fussing with the wrappings. What is this gift? What was the author so anxious to convey? What inspires his book? For the greatness of *Doctor Zhivago* lies primarily in the revelation that, in the words of Rilke, 'life is a glory'. It is this great open secret, that only wisdom knows and that art is forever seeking to represent, that Pasternak has enshrined in his novel.

Against the constant background of political realities, the militant political realities of twentieth-century Russia, which almost seem to overwhelm human existence, Zhivago might have been expected to be nurturing some kind of relevant attitude, some theory. If not a political theory, then at least an apolitical one. Some direct answer, in any case, to the burning problems of life in Russia. But the arresting fact is that he has no such answer to offer. More than that: speculative of mind though he is, he never seems to be speculating directly upon the problems that appear to demand an answer most urgently. In this seeming weakness and non-engagement of Zhivago, Pasternak is in fact making a daring assertion: that the ultimate issues of life do not lie among what seem to be the momentous upheavals of history, but are revealed solely in that life-within-life that can be known only through the individual self. To call such an assertion daring is not to say that it is new. Pasternak is the first to insist that he is only rediscovering and reaffirming. For Zhivago or Pasternak, the eminent spokesman of his truth is Christ. But it is not 'religion' that is being affirmed; it is that discovery of life out of which religion, or art, is made.

The disservice of over-sophisticated interpretations of Pasternak's novel is not in any one argument that is devised or any one point that is made. The great disservice is the creation of an attitude that is unreceptive to the lyrical simplicity of the book's major theme. To think of Zhivago as anything other than a suffering, exulting human person; to think of Lara as anything other than a Russian girl or Russian woman, is simply to lose touch at the outset with the solid reality in which Pasternak intends to work. Of course Lara will become for Zhivago something like the very embodiment of his beloved Russia, indeed of reality itself. But this is what every lover finds, this is the kind of rhapsody that every lover sings. Obviously, in a book so rich in imagery, in this poet's novel, there will be many imaginative hints and constructions. And we as readers are permitted to let our imaginations wander freely among the lights and shadows; but we are required first of all to see the real persons and the real objects that exist in the universe of this solid book.

The sense of life that quickens its pages draws all its power from Zhivago's dogged insistence upon remaining down to earth. This is what gives his story its triumphant meaning. If Zhivago did not inhabit the same world that we inhabit, he would lose his hold on us. But most of all he would not be able to say what Pasternak wants to tell us: that life lies not in some rarefied atmosphere, either of aesthetic daydreams or supernatural marvels or political abstractions, but among washtubs and hayfields, where these pure and humble things of common life are really recognised. It is in this spirit that Zhivago writes in praise of Pushkin in an entry in his diary:

> Air, light, the noise of life, reality burst into his poetry from the street as through an open

[3] Edmund Wilson, *The New Yorker*, 15 November 1958, p. 216.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> window. The outside world, everyday things, nouns, crowded in and took possession of his lines, driving out the vaguer parts of speech. Things and more things lined up in rhymed columns on the page. . . . Only the familiar transformed by genius is truly great. The best object lesson in this is Pushkin.[4]

One of the sacred objects in Zhivago's world is a large, convenient table near the window of a well-furnished room. One keeps seeing that room in Varykino as if it were Zhivago's home in the world. And indeed in a delirium Zhivago had once dreamed of Moscow streets running over his desk, under the orange glow of the lamplight. Lara, too, in longing thoughts about returning home to her husband again, thinks mainly of Pasha's desk in the lamplight.

Lara is almost the ministering angel of common work and common tasks. She is eternally busy at the plain jobs of household life, and she becomes in this 'prosaic, weekday aspect of her being . . . more breath-taking than if . . . [she were] going to a ball'.[5] Silently watching her in the library at Yuriatin, Zhivago reflects: 'She reads not as if reading were the highest human activity, but as if it were the simplest thing that even animals could do. As if she were carrying water from a well, or peeling potatoes'.[6]

IN a book that in itself has come to represent a kind of testament of human freedom, and in which the freedom of the person is everywhere asserted, it is remarkable how absent from its pages is the spirit of abandon, of excess. For all their animation, both Lara and Zhivago remain the very models of good sense. Not for a moment do they live together in a fool's paradise. Their deepest wish is to be able to live their lives sensibly, in the order and peace of good housekeeping and honest relationships. Even in the child Katenka, Lara observes the instincts of order and domesticity. In Lara's dissatisfaction with the gypsy life she must lead with Zhivago, she is only repeating in her more feminine way the reflection of one of Zhivago's old private thoughts: '. . . real life, meaningful experience, the actual goal of all quests, this was what art aimed at—homecoming, return to one's family, to oneself, to true existence'.[7] The image of Lara and Zhivago seeking quiet domesticity in the abandoned home at Varykino becomes almost the central image of the book. They know they are living in a state of siege, barring off the rats and the cold inside, the wolves of evil omen outside, and beyond that the desolate expanse of winter and mortal danger. Within this fragile sanctuary at the end of the world, Lara busies herself with peeling potatoes and heating water, and Zhivago with writing poems. What setting could ever be devised to give greater poignancy to the sanctity of ordinary life? In the very midst of all the upheaval that surrounds them in the Russian world and threatens their very existence, Lara and Zhivago not only stay at home but seek home all the more desperately. Rather than seeking freedom in escape, they are bent on finding the stillness in the eye of the hurricane. It is part of the grim realism of the book that they will not be allowed to stand very long against the wind, which will finally blow them both into oblivion. But while they are able to endure, they stay fast. In all of Russian literature it would be hard to find a work that expresses more constant love of the Russian world than *Doctor Zhivago*. Russia is the place in which all the worst things are happening, a world that will finally drive both Lara and Zhivago to their death. But throughout their lives their greatest longing remains to find their home in it again. The love of life that permeates *Doctor Zhivago* is never abstract; it is always life as Zhivago and Lara know it, in the place they know. This is a love so great that it is willing to become martyrdom.

Russian nature is always invading. In the midst of life's cyclones, Zhivago is always being refreshed by a spring evening, the light from the sky, the smell of fields and trees, or woods in the setting sun. His sense of the world outdoors is so strong and lively that even in the bleakest times, as during his long walking journey back to Moscow, he is still capable of the old Pasternakian wit:

> The woods and the fields offered a complete contrast in those days. Deserted by man, the fields looked orphaned as if his absence had put them under a curse. The forest, however, well rid of him, flourished proudly in freedom as though released from captivity.[8]

This love of life was always visible in the work of Pasternak the poet, long before the writing of *Doctor Zhivago*. It is a love that now rises

[4] Pantheon edition of *Doctor Zhivago*, translated by Max Hayward and Manya Harari, pp. 284–85.
[5] Ibid., p. 406.
[6] Ibid., p. 291.
[7] Ibid., p. 164.
[8] Ibid., p. 467.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to pathos, because it must declare itself in the midst of hostile forces of so great a magnitude that it becomes the work of gallantry to speak, in the teeth of the gale, in the still, small voice of the poet. The significance of Pasternak's last work lies in his refusal to forsake the common earth; indeed, in his unaltered insistence that life resides only among common things, in unmannered relationships, in wholesome work and robust sanity. The pressure of dire events only forces Zhivago, like Pasternak, to draw closer to the plain sources of his being, to plant his feet all the more firmly on Russian earth.

Out of this momentous assertion that 'the poetry of earth is never dead', all the major attitudes and thoughts of Zhivago and Lara can be deduced. And so the novel is filled with comment on many topics; but the comment can always be referred back to the stand that Zhivago and Lara have taken toward life.

NO sharper judgment of political realities is made than by the observer who insists merely on remaining human. War, revolution, propaganda, terror—all the cruelties and defacements of political life are never more rudely exposed than by the look of a simple human eye. Pasternak's man with the right arm and left leg chopped off would never have been allowed to crawl into the pages of an official history of the Revolution. Pasternak's view of the Revolution, it has been said, would have been much less cruel if he had been a political writer.[9] Lara's lament over the falseness that had invaded her relations with Pasha-Strelnikov, her husband, is the most convincing condemnation of the falseness that corrupted Russian life generally after the Revolution. In this way, of course, *Doctor Zhivago* is a commentary upon Russian history. Zhivago lives in the shadows of the flames of twentieth-century Russia. But the verdict his life passes upon his world never takes its bearings from political thinking. By remaining simply a man, Zhivago passes his final judgment on the most critical historical events of his time. In order to find its political significance, the reader of *Doctor Zhivago* must first of all assimilate its sense of life, that seems careless of politics.

Similarly, though there is religious discussion in the book, we are always being reminded that Zhivago and Lara are not overtly religious, display no formal religiosity. What Zhivago is expressing is life, not religion—but he finds thereby that he has achieved a fresh understanding of what Christ was talking about. Zhivago is the truly religious person, who always seeks the place where life lies, and who by so doing arrives at the intimate knowledge of religious meaning. If one needed confirmation of this, Pasternak himself confirmed it in an interview reported in 1958, in which he said:

> 'We have learned that we are the guests of existence, travellers between two stations. We must discover security within ourselves. During our short span of life we must find our own insights into our relationship with the existence in which we participate so briefly. Otherwise, we cannot live! This means, as I see it, a departure from the materialistic view of the nineteenth century. It means a reawakening of the spiritual world, of our inner life—of religion. I don't mean religion as a dogma or as a church, but as a vital feeling. Do you understand what I mean?'[10]

In a recent discussion of *Doctor Zhivago*, John Strachey concludes that the '*troika* of values' in Pasternak's novel consists of 'aesthetic, ethical, and religious experience'.[11] Like so much of the literary criticism of the book, this brand of political and social criticism simply submerges the inner excitement of Pasternak's message under a heavy layer of thought. By finding only such colourless abstractions, Strachey simply confesses that he can show us nothing in the book that would justify our close attention—to say nothing of any quality in the work that might excite our imagination or refresh our spirit. What originality can one possibly see in making the old sweeping gesture of pointing to 'aesthetic, ethical, and religious experience', as if that were all that Pasternak wished to do. Of course these are aspects of the book. But they are, at the most, abstract aspects of a central lyrical vitality. Pasternak is announcing a much more lively lesson than such worn-out words suggest. He is saying that we must find life again. And that out of the rediscovery of life, achieved in the midst of the battle of strident ideologies, that besieged and belittled hero, the single person, will find his centre again. Pasternak's hero

[9] F. Stepun, 'B. L. Pasternak', *Novy Zhurnal*, March 1959, p. 202.

[10] Nils Åke Nilsson, 'Pasternak: "We Are the Guests of Existence",' *The Reporter*, 27 November 1958, p. 35.

[11] John Strachey, 'The Strangled Cry', *Encounter*, December 1960, pp. 36–37.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

is not a troika of values, which would be nothing for us, already gorged on 'values'. His hero is simply any one really living person. Yuri Zhivago is such a person. Lara also. If the book has a major weakness, it is that only Yuri and Lara are really alive in it. Around them come and go many lesser people; around them swirl some of the fiercest storms of the twentieth century. Just by remaining unalterably human and alive, sane and responsive, they embody the good news of Pasternak's testament.

The achievement of *Doctor Zhivago*, almost apart from its successes and failures as a novel, lies in extracting this joyful teaching out of the least promising circumstances of contemporary Soviet life. In *Doctor Zhivago*, Russian literature once again returns to its classic task of meditating upon the mystery of life—in an age of Socialist-Realism, when the political control of literature makes the work of genuine edification in art not only unpopular but illegitimate. For once in a long time, a literary work from Russia has succeeded in transcending politics and striking through to the reader's own centre of being. If out of this we insist on making just another political treatise or another literary fable, we simply reveal in ourselves the waning of that sense of life which Pasternak's novel was intended to restore.

A NOTE ON SOVIET SATIRE

Maurice Friedberg

IN recent years travellers returning from the USSR have almost unanimously echoed the declaration made by Stalin after the first five-year plan in the 1930s: 'life has become better, life has become merrier'. There is, they report, more food, better clothing, improved housing, less fear; the Russians appear more content, relaxed, and smiling.

But is the happier mood reflected in Soviet books and the theatre? Is there much laughter in Soviet literature?

Eight years after Stalin's death the answer is still, unfortunately, a negative one. While not as grim as in the last years of the dictator's life, Soviet literature is still extremely deficient in humour and satire.

The population's hunger for laughter is best illustrated by the unusual success of the few comedy films that did appear during the thaw, by the packed auditoriums in the circuses and theatres presenting revivals of old comedies, as well as by the lightning speed with which the new reprints of humorous works—both early Soviet and pre-revolutionary—sell out in the book-stores. In the theatres, tremendous enthusiasm was generated by the film *Carnival in Moscow*, and there were long queues for the performances of Mayakovsky's *Bedbug*. As for books, the most notable examples are the sales of reprints of Sasha Chorny's rather uninspired verse written at the beginning of this century, and of what are probably the best satirical works in all of Soviet literature, Ilf's and Petrov's *Twelve Chairs* (the English translation was called *Diamonds to sit on*) and *The Little Golden Calf*.

At present, Soviet literature cannot boast any humorists of the stature of Ilf and Petrov or Zoshchenko. Perhaps the best known living practitioner of the genre is Leonid Lench. He is by no means a newcomer; Lench has been writing short stories and feuilletons for many years. His heroes are philistines, petty bureaucrats and apple-polishers. In the last few years Sergei Mikhalkov has contributed some verse and comedies, such as *The Monument To Myself*, the story of a megalomaniac functionary; G. Troyepolsky wrote *The Candidate of Sciences*, which he called 'a partly satirical tale' about scientists in a 'Horse-Feeding Research Institute'; and S. Smirnov published *A Hundred Short Fables*. Nikolai Pogodin, a leading playwright, not long ago completed *The Young Girl Student*. Other recent comedies include L. Zorin's *The Good Fellows*; A. Strokopytov's *Laugh, Clown*; K. Finn's *The Outset of Life*; Ya. Lipkovich's *An Insufferable Character*; and V. Levidov's *A Three-Minute Talk*. One should also mention a collection of humorous tales by Semyon Narinyani.

The volume of new humorous writing has been very meagre indeed. As a Soviet critic explained in *Literaturnaya Gazeta* (14 April 1960), laughter is a *defitsitnyi zhanr*. More serious, however, is the problem of the quality of the works published. As a rule, the laughter is very timid. The elder statesman of Soviet journalism, David Zaslavsky, has complained

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that Lench's stories lack bite and spirit.[1] In an article devoted to humour and satire, one Soviet critic observed that Soviet authors write cautious stories, only mildly amusing, because of their concern lest anyone in the USSR feel insulted; the article's title (borrowed, incidentally, from an observation by Alexander Herzen) was somewhat ominous: 'Laughter Is No Joking Matter'.[2] Another critic has noted that comic and satirical characters in recent Soviet literature are mostly theatrical people (are they less likely to feel insulted?) or members of assorted 'unusual' professions—but not workers and peasants. Indeed,

> playwrights often feel that if a character bears a positive function, if he is a good worker and is active in public life—well, then, there is no room for levity! You can neither make fun of him nor crack jokes at his expense.[3]

This state of affairs was discussed at a plenary session of the Moscow Union of Soviet Writers late in 1959. One of those present reported that the editors like only that satire which criticises shortcomings of the *past*, 'that which has already been officially condemned'. Another participant declared that the future historian who would, naturally enough, turn to satire in order to learn what had hindered the march towards communism, would not find much evidence.[4]

ONE cannot accuse the Soviet authorities of not paying sufficient lip-service to the idea that there is a need for laughter in Soviet literature. Hardly a year passes without another appeal to Soviet writers to create works permeated with laughter—both good-natured laughter and laughter directed against all ugly phenomena of Soviet life, i.e., both humour and satire. Officially, the Soviet leaders differ on this question from Plato, who thought comedy undignified and believed that it 'should be left to slaves and foreign hirelings'. Indeed, such views are condemned as being characteristic of 'reactionary classes and social groups in general'.[5] Moreover, officially, the party welcomes the criticism inherent in humorous and satirical literature. In his conversations with writers in 1957, Khrushchev said:

> Nobody can accuse us, communists, of fear of criticism. . . . History demonstrates that fear of criticism is characteristic of declining social classes and their political parties.[6]

Why, then, have the Soviet writers failed to produce, if not new Gogols and Saltykov-Shchedrins (as Malenkov exhorted them to do during his premiership), then at least good imitators of their styles? The answer is to be sought in some of the basic demands which socialist-realism imposes on would-be humorists and satirists.

Most important of these is the requirement that, side by side with the objects of ridicule, writers also provide affirmative images with which the former can be conveniently compared for the reader's edification. Typical of Soviet literature, this demand runs counter to Western literary tradition, including the Russian. As Rufus Mathewson has justly noted:

> The heroes of the world's great literature are not edifying in the copybook sense, homilies cannot be drawn from the examples of their lives. The Soviet hero, on the contrary, is primarily a model whose example is expected to give rise to admiration and emulation. He stands in an authoritarian relationship to the reader. He is the representative of official virtue and the certified model for behaviour.[7]

The requirement that the work of humour or satire be endowed with a 'positive' message has been stated on numerous occasions. Thus Ya. Elsberg, the Soviet Union's foremost authority on Saltykov-Shchedrin, underlined in his recent history of satire that

> Soviet satire is permeated with faith in the invincibility of the new, in the victory of communism; it helps to strengthen our social system, the socialist state and culture.[8]

---

[1] *Oktyabr*, January 1960, p. 219.

[2] U. Guralnik, 'Smekh—delo neshutochnoye', *Don*, February 1960, p. 163. An interesting instance was reported in *Literaturnaya Gazeta* of 14 April 1960: Soviet policemen criticised Strokopytov's *Laugh, Clown* because the comedy's villain is a police lieutenant.

[3] L. Malyugin in *Izvestiya*, 31 July 1959.

[4] Guralnik, op. cit., p. 162.

[5] Yuri Borev, *O komicheskom* (Moscow, 1957), p. 42.

[6] Ibid., p. 5.

[7] Rufus W. Mathewson, Jr, *The Positive Hero in Russian Literature* (New York, 1958), p. 10.

[8] Ya. Elsberg, *Voprosy istorii satiry* (Moscow, 1957), p. 19. Elsberg's estimate of the qualitative and quantitative importance of Soviet satire is illustrated by his decision to devote to it 19 pages out of a total of 425.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Unbelievable as this may seem, even circus clowns are not exempted from this requirement. At the 1959 All-Union Conference On Questions of Clown Art,

> In closing the conference, F. Bardiyan, Director of the All-Union Association of State Circuses, called on clowns to penetrate more boldly into life, to fight more actively against shortcomings, and to assert in the circus ring the new qualities of Soviet man, the builder of communism.[9]

All this is a far cry from Gogol and Saltykov-Shchedrin. In the former's *Dead Souls*, there is only one slightly 'positive' protagonist, the landowner Kostanzhoglo, but even he occupies a very peripheral position in the novel; in Gogol's *Inspector General*, the finest comedy in the Russian repertory, there is not a single 'positive' personage. To this writer's recollection, there are no 'positive' heroes in any of the better-known satires of Saltykov-Shchedrin.

What the Soviet critics have in mind, then, are not Gogol and Saltykov-Shchedrin, but rather a neo-classicist like Fonvizin, in whose comedy *The Minor* there are, in addition to its famous villains, several tedious eighteenth-century *raisonneurs* who act as spokesmen for the approved virtues.

But this only solves the problems of *ideinost* and *partiinost*: the would-be author of a Soviet satire has to include in his work a 'positive' message and make it very clear that he is against sin and on the side of the angels. Much more difficult is the problem of *tipichnost*, i.e., showing the 'typical'. A clear admission of this is found in Borev's study (p. 143):

> Some of our critics say that the positive and the negative in satire should be found in the same proportion as they are found in Soviet life.

What should the proportion be? One part negative to six parts positive? Four per cent negative to ninety-six per cent positive? Clearly, the negative characters would have to be greatly outnumbered by the positive ones, and thus the outcome of the conflict would be only too easily predictable. In fact, the conflict would probably be resolved so rapidly that there would hardly be much time for laughter.

There are more difficulties in store for the aspiring Soviet writer of humour and satire. The villains must be shown not as products of the Soviet system, but as 'survivals' of the past, as anachronisms, as living fossils. The heroes, on the other hand, must be incarnations of the virtues of the new Soviet man who, admittedly, still is a rare species. As a result, in an orthodox work of Soviet satire, one villainous respresentative of a type that is almost extinct would be pitted against many upright men of a type that, even officially, is only beginning to appear.

WHO are to be the villians in Soviet satire? In the 1920s and early 1930s it was, in fact, possible to present them, literally, as survivals of the *ancien regime*. Thus, Ilf and Petrov depicted in *The Twelve Chairs* a former nobleman, a priest, a former tsarist bureaucrat, an army officer, etc. Mikhail Zoshchenko thrived on petty functionaries, semi-literates, and simple folk who could not understand the great social upheavals around them. These were, beyond dispute, numerous and typical, even though doomed to eventual extinction.

The problem in the 1950s and 1960s is more complex. Admittedly, there are in the USSR instances of graft, corruption, bureaucracy, greed, gullibility, theft, and so forth. But these are, officially, only isolated events. Therefore, to mock them in a work of literature is to incur the risk of being accused of slandering Soviet society, because a literary creation is, in the Soviet view, an *obobshchenie*, i.e., an artistic generalisation of actual experience. Thus, laughter in Soviet literature faces two dangers:

> The first danger is that criticism may grow into slander, a satire become a lampoon. . . . The second danger is that criticism may be suppressed by conservative forces whose interests are not advanced by the growth of comedy.[10]

Immediately following Stalin's death, it was hoped that laughter might be revived in Soviet literature because an 'open season' would be declared on a number of subjects hitherto sacrosanct. As late as 1957, Elsberg wrote that Soviet satire should expose the evils of 'underestimating the historical role of the masses [and] opinions linked with the cult of personality'.[11] Soon, however, it became apparent that the party had decided to halt its anti-Stalin campaign, and no satirical works dealing with the subject appeared.

The prospects for Soviet Gogols and

[9] *Sovetskaya kultura*, 3 December 1959, p. 3.

[10] Borev, op. cit., p. 74.

[11] Elsberg, op. cit., p. 293.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Saltykov-Shchedrins are also dim for reasons frankly enunciated by Borev (p. 115):

> One of the basic features of Soviet satire is that its object is not the ruling political system and not the manifestations of its very nature and spirit, but that which hinders the ruling system in its development, that which contradicts its spirit and essence. The laughter of Gogol and Shchedrin was directed against the then omnipotent evil.

Hence, laughter in Soviet literature cannot be directed against the system itself; it cannot ridicule any of its institutions or aberrations; it cannot even mock its enemies without taking the precaution of pointing out that they are not numerous, that they are weak, and will disappear in the near future.

These are the reasons why the only humorous genre presently flourishing in the Soviet Union is the newspaper *feuilleton*. Both writers and editors favour the *feuilleton*

> . . . because it does not claim to present the typical, because it does not generalise. They are reassured by the fact that in a *feuilleton*, as a rule, the hero is not invented, that his address and other vital statistics are known, and therefore, so to speak, only isolated cases are treated.[12]

The late Soviet writer Pyotr Pavlenko said in 1954 that it is easy to be witty when one does not respect anything.[13] Pavlenko was not altogether wrong. To be effective, laughter must be somewhat disrespectful. In centuries gone by, absolute monarchs seem to have been aware of this, for they allowed their court jesters a degree of freedom of speech that no courtiers, let alone ordinary mortals, enjoyed. As the outspoken young Soviet poet Yevgeni Yevtushenko put it recently:

Kings, tsars, and emperors
Rulers of the entire world
Could command parades
But could not command humour.

True, Yevtushenko admits, humour is frequently placed behind bars as a *political* criminal; but it always manages to escape.[14] Modern 'kings, tsars, and emperors' who engage in similar practices would do well to heed the poet's words.

Over the years, Soviet humorists and satirists have frequently been accused of disrespect and subversion, often with serious consequences. As a result of official displeasure with his work, Mikhail Bulgakov, the author of the comedy *The Fatal Eggs*, eventually stopped writing and, much like Pasternak, retired to the far safer work of a literary editor. Vladimir Mayakovsky's plays *The Bedbug* and *The Bathhouse* were banished from the Soviet stage for many years. The writings of Ilf and Petrov have only recently been removed from the unofficial index of forbidden books. Most tragic was the fate of Mikhail Zoshchenko. Denounced by Zhdanov and expelled from the Union of Soviet Writers in 1946, he died, a broken man, in 1958. Only after his death did a small edition of his works reappear in print. These may be some of the reasons why at present so few Soviet writers choose humour and satire as their speciality.

According to the *Large Soviet Encyclopedia*, in the Middle Ages 'the ideological hegemony of the Church paralysed satire, which at that time appeared for the most part in folklore'.[15] For the time being, much of Soviet laughter will similarly have to remain underground in the guise of social and political anecdotes. One day, possibly, these embryos of social satire will be given the opportunity to develop into works of art and be born legally in printed form. One must hope that this day will come. There is much insight in the words of Vissarion Belinsky, the founding father of Russian literary criticism, who characterised humorous writing as 'the flower of civilisation, the fruit of a society that has matured'.[16]

---

[12] Guralnik, op. cit., p. 161.
[13] Borev, op. cit., p. 113.

[14] *Oktyabr*, July 1960, pp. 122–23. While this particular poem was not mentioned, Yevtushenko's other unorthodox works were attacked by *Komsomolskaya Pravda* in January 1961.
[15] *Bolshaya sovetskaya entsiklopediya*, vol. 38 (1955), p. 132.
[16] V. G. Belinsky, *Polnoye sobranie sochinenii*, Vol. VIII (Moscow, 1955), p. 90.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE PRODIGAL'S RETURN

I

L. L.

THE second part of Ilya Ehrenburg's autobiography, *People, Years, and Life*, dealing with the period 1917–21, is now ready. The January and February 1961 issues of *Novy Mir* contain the first two instalments. In them Ehrenburg writes mainly about people whose ending was sad—Mayakovski, Mandelshtam, Tsvetaeva, Titian Tabidze, and Paolo Yashvili.

About Mayakovski Ehrenburg quotes his article published in *Izvestiya* at the time of the first Congress of Soviet Writers:

> 'We were not applauding because anyone wanted to canonise Mayakovski; we were applauding because Mayakovski's name signifies for us a rejection of all literary canons'. I could not imagine that a year later they would really begin to canonise Mayakovski. I did not go to his funeral. Friends told me that his grave was too short. It seems to me that it was his posthumous fame that turned out to be too short, or rather too narrow.

Ehrenburg recalls the suicide of Tsvetaeva, and the death 'ten thousand miles from his native town', of Mandelshtam. He also 'rehabilitates' Pasternak, absolving him of sins against the state. 'He appears as an unfortunate man engaged in a duel with the state . . . I am convinced that Pasternak did not intend to injure our country'.

He gives a very deft and discreet account of his own activities during the revolution, partly apologetic and partly evasive, but full of fascinating details about people and events during the revolutionary upheaval.

The third volume, which Ehrenburg is now writing, will cover the period 1921–32 and will give his reminiscences of Babel and of the French, German, and Austrian writers he met at the time (Toller, Döblin, Heinrich Mann, Roth). The fourth volume will end with the outbreak of the second world war, and will include his recollections of the Spanish civil war. The fifth is to cover the war itself, and the sixth the period after the war. The autobiography is to end—perhaps symbolically—with the publication of *The Thaw*.

Ehrenburg is never out of the news, but this time it is not only the publication of his memoirs that has stirred interest. On 26 January 1961 he received a second Order of Lenin on his seventieth birthday. *Pravda* hailed him as a great Soviet writer, and he was honoured by a reception given by the Union of Soviet Writers at which he delivered a speech, later broadcast by Moscow radio.

For Ehrenburg it was clearly an occasion to reassert all the points he has been trying to make in his writings since the publication of *The Thaw*. He had made no apology for his previous political opportunism, but in the last seven years has pressed consistently for a more civilised approach to the arts in the Soviet Union. This was clearly visible not only in *The Thaw* itself, but in such essays as 'The Lessons of Stendhal' and 'On re-reading Chekhov'.

In his speech he said that 'many people take more easily to the articles I wrote about fascism or the struggle for peace than to the books I wrote about Stendhal or painting'. It is not difficult to divine who these people are; Ehrenburg makes it fairly obvious. 'I do not believe people who talk about the love of the fatherland if they do not love their nearest neighbours, but humiliate the old and brutally break the young ones'. Such people 'try to demonstrate their own patriotism by slandering others'.

On 26 October 1948 *Pravda* published an article by Ehrenburg in which he poured scorn on the 'ludicrous and counter-revolutionary idea' that Jews of different countries had any ties in common, either because of their religion or because of their common destiny. If all men with turned-up noses were persecuted, no doubt they would come to feel a certain bond with each other, but would anyone in their senses regard them for that reason as a people? The 'black years' in the history of Soviet Jewry followed, with the persecution of 'rootless cosmopolitans', the 'doctors plot', etc. It is difficult to say what was Ehrenburg's own role during those years, or how this most cosmopolitan of writers survived. Now, for the first time, Ehrenburg referred to himself as a Jew. He said that 'as long as there is a single anti-semite left in the world, I will proudly answer the question about nationality: "I am a Jew"'. He referred explicitly to the years of persecution:

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> Chekhov wrote that it is the duty of a writer to defend man; there are enough public prosecutors in this world. No literature is more humanitarian than the Russian, and I am proud to be just a Russian writer. I know that some will be surprised by these words. I remember the years when the noble words of Belinski, an undoubtedly progressive man, were used against all his cherished ideals, years when at every turn there was a search for 'rootless vagabonds without passports'.

Ehrenburg pointedly recalled the words written by Julian Tuwim at the time when Polish Jewry was being exterminated by Hitler:

> My friend the great Polish poet Julian Tuwim, who is now dead, described very precisely a similar situation. I shall now read his words: 'I am a Pole because I like to be one. This is my own business and I am not obliged to account to anyone . . . I hear voices: "Well, but if you are a Pole, why the 'we Jews'?" I am ready with a reply: For reasons of blood. Then this means racialism? On the contrary. There are two kinds of blood: the blood that flows in the veins and the blood that flows out of them. The blood of Jews (not Jewish blood) is flowing in deep and wide streams, and in this new Jordan I make my baptism, the ardent brotherhood in martyrdom of the Jews'.

Ehrenburg added: 'Well, I cannot put it any better than that. Whether you like it or not, I am a Russian writer'. (This resurrected blood tie has recently found another outlet. Ehrenburg has written an introduction to *The Diary of Anne Frank*, which has at last been published in the USSR.)

He spoke scathingly of the banality of Soviet art. There were so many paintings in the exhibitions 'which are like fifth-rate coloured photographs in gilded frames. Pictures in which every single hair is painted to look like a real hair do not add up to art. The fact that these pictures portray, instead of a stern-looking Marshal in dress uniform, a pleasant-looking collective farmer in a semi-worsted suit, does not amount to art'.

Literature fared no better than painting:

> The press often writes about 'reprehensible phenomena' in family life. But how can people find out what is love, what is nobility, friendship, loyalty? Perhaps from those novels where children are born, between one chapter and the next, thanks to the production pledges of the newly-weds?

The conclusion echoes the theme of 'the hundred flowers', though the metaphor is musical rather than horticultural:

> It is necessary that many instruments should sound in the orchestra today. The symphony of the new epoch cannot be performed on drums and trumpets alone. Today the drums do not wake us up but send us to sleep. It is high time that this was understood, not only by the drummers, but also by the conductor of the orchestra.

II

Wanda Bronska-Pampuch

THERE seems little doubt that, unless he had conformed, Ehrenburg would not have survived the Stalin era. But conformism alone would not have been enough. No one, it is true, had more non-conformists destroyed than Stalin, but he did not stop there; there are still a fair number of people, in Russia and in Israel, who would have refused to shake hands with him, because he stood cynically by and did nothing when it was his friends who were done to death.

But it is impossible to publish nothing but works of art, and it is equally impossible to publish books only by authors whose characters are unexceptionable. That would be the end of literature. Ilya Ehrenburg's books are not works of art, but in most of them you can find the key to understanding the period of Soviet history in which they were written—perhaps for the very reason that their author adapted himself so unresistingly to the given conditions.

The first part of his *Memoirs*, which appeared in the August and October 1960 issues of *Novy Mir* (publication of the second part began in January 1961) is also a piece of current history—although it ends with the opening of the Russian Revolution. For look! This is

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

how Ehrenburg is writing today. This is what he can say today—yesterday it might have been impossible.

There is still a good deal that is impossible today, or rather, it is possible only because Ehrenburg is writing not about today, but about the early years of this century. Will his young readers look at his words in this light? I did not find Ehrenburg's story of his life particularly interesting until I saw a young Soviet intellectual completely absorbed by it.

> I understood the word 'Jew' in a special sense: I am one of those who have to be insulted; this seemed to me unjust and at the same time quite natural. My father, an unbeliever, condemned those Jews who, to make their lot easier, had themselves baptised, and I understood from my earliest years that a man must not be ashamed of his ancestry!

Trolleybuses and street cars, the metro and the sputnik have replaced the sleighs and horse-carts; the whole appearance of Moscow has changed from the ground up; but it is still necessary for Jewish pupils in Moscow schools to be told by parents who are honest that nobody ought to be ashamed of his origins, not even when it means that he will be cut off from further study.

At the age of ten Ehrenburg struck a school comrade who taunted him with being a Jew. They became friends and after that nobody dared to insult him. Half a century later, when he was accused by friends and comrades of 'cosmopolitism'—'cosmopolitan' is the swear-word equivalent for Jew in the Soviet Union—a blow at one of them would have landed Ehrenburg in prison, from which in any case he was not far distant at the time. Even today his recollections are clothed in ambiguous words:

> I could never quite understand what Pushkin meant when he said 'There isn't any luck in the world, there is only peace and freedom'. . . . In 1949 I was sitting with Marshak in the Bolshoi Theatre. On the stage they were speaking about Pushkin. The evening was devoted to his memory. Then we went to a café at the corner of Kuznetski Most. I asked Yakov Samoilovich what kind of luck Pushkin could have been dreaming of, if it wasn't peace and freedom. Marshak didn't answer.

How many of the really young Soviet readers who read those lines will know that in 1949 the pogrom which Stalin ordered had already begun, and that the two eminent Soviet writers in the Bolshoi Theatre must have been wondering whether the next day they themselves, as 'cosmopolitans, Zionist agents and criminals' would not lose their peace and freedom, as hundreds of their closest friends had. There is the suggestion of a secret cry when the old Ehrenburg tells us today that it was shortly after his incarceration in a Tsarist prison that he learned to love and to value for all the rest of his life the sweets of freedom. And how idyllic the prisons were at that time! 'Prison is a good school', Ehrenburg says, and hastens to add, 'provided that they don't beat you, that it is your enemies who have put you there, and that your comrades think of you in friendship'. But what if it is your friends who have put you there, if you are beaten there, and if your comrades forget your name?

THE romantic young man, full of energy and adolescent conflict, knew nothing of that when he set out to change the world. There is no angry young man of today who will not echo his mood when he writes 'I was surrounded on all sides by lies. Sometimes I wanted to flee to the Indian jungle, sometimes I wanted to throw a bomb into the house of the Governor-General of Moscow on the Tverskaya, and at other times I wanted to shoot myself!'

He was contemptuous of poetry and thought it unworthy of a revolutionary to have feelings or, at least, to show those that he had. Nevertheless he declaimed with enthusiasm Alexei Tolstoy's poem, 'But if to love, then without reason, if to destroy, then thoroughly'.

A large part of the *Memoirs* is taken up by the time that Ehrenburg lived in Paris. Before the Soviet reader he displays the gay and colourful picture of the international company of artists and intellectuals who in those years lived and worked in the French capital. The Café Rotonde in which so many of the famous people of the first half of the twentieth century met, where ideas and schools of art were generated which are still guides for today, became Ilya Ehrenburg's school. Here, in the society of

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the great, torn in every direction by feelings, influences, examples, he spent his finest years. What he says of those years must make a deep impact on the reader, if for no other reason than that he can sense in them the spirit of an age and of a society which was seeking the new and, being free of all prejudice and all commands, therefore found it.

> The people who met in the Rotonde were not representatives of a particular tendency, not propagandists .of a particular 'ism'. There was nothing in common between the arid cubism about which Rivera got so enthusiastic, and the lyrical painting of Modigliani. That was when the art experts thought up the name 'Paris School'. Perhaps it would be more correct to say the dreadful school of life, and we went through that school in Paris.

At that time Ehrenburg published a volume of poems with the title *Poems On The Eve* (*Stikhi o kanune*). Today he does not like these poems, but finds the title of the volume very significant. Those years were like a single unbroken twilight. Many people might think that they were an epilogue, but Ehrenburg likens them to the white nights of Leningrad. Lovers do not notice when the night ends and the gray of morning begins. In the white light of those nights evening twilight merges into morning twilight, and so in history a transition may last for years. All his life has passed in this transition.

Like so many other passages in these Memoirs, this poetical comparison is half propaganda and half cynical apology. When it is impossible to distinguish between the red of sunset and the red of dawn, it is easy to make a mistake.

BUT in any case, whoever overlooks the little dry crumbs of propaganda which are scattered through the pages can take delight in Ehrenburg's personal reminiscences of Picasso, can learn much that is interesting about Modigliani, about French writers, and about Jaurès, about Russian writers from Bunin to Alexei Tolstoi and Maxim Gorki, and also about Lenin and Lunacharski. The life of the emigrés and the different roads by which the Russian intellectuals among them found their way back to Russia and to the Revolution, or to Russia and not to the Revolution are, it is true, not described explicitly, but still hinted at clearly enough for the reader to get some idea how difficult the road often was. Difficult, above all, for Ehrenburg, more artist than revolutionary, whose ties with Paris are still strong. That one can love Paris and still be a good Soviet citizen is perhaps something which the Soviet reader will learn from this book; even today Ehrenburg cannot say that to the artist, who is always one step ahead of the ordinary man, national frontiers seem superfluous. Are there not still somewhere people ready to stone him as a cosmopolitan?

'THREE, SEVEN, ACE'

Tibor Meray

THE review *Novy Mir*, in its third number of the year 1960, published a story by Vladimir Tendriakov entitled *Three, Seven, Ace.* Shortly afterwards *Pravda* published an article violently attacking this author and his story. Under the heading 'Who is being accused?' the critic, a certain Lukin, endeavoured to prove that this well-known novelist, instead of blaming the evil and reactionary forces of the past, was making war upon the community of Soviet men. Were Soviet men incapable, then, of rising above the consequences and obsessions of the past?

We know that when an attack of this kind is launched in *Pravda*, it does not represent a personal initiative; it is always the result of discussion—sometimes heated—in the intimate conclaves of the Association of Writers; it may even follow upon a resolution of the party. However that may be, Tendriakov's story, as well as the remonstrance it has provoked, prove once again that there is something new in the East. It also shows that the ferment in Soviet letters which set in immediately after Stalin's death is far from having subsided. It is worth while, therefore, to look more closely at

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

this writer and his work, and to pay some attention to the discussions they have aroused.

The plot of the story is of the simplest. The scene is set in the heart of Russia, on the banks of an immense river that one may suppose to be the Volga. There, some thirty labourers are living in a small settlement. Their work is to deal with the big tree trunks that get stranded on the banks or sandshoals as they float downstream, to push them out into the current again and send them on their journey to the timber yard.

One day, the youngest labourer of the gang, Leska Malenkin, saves a certain Nikolai Buchuev from drowning. This man is known to no one in the neighbourhood; his papers show beyond a doubt that he is a vagabond with a criminal record. In spite of this, the leader of the gang, Sasha Dubinin, takes pity on the stranger, brings him right into the little colony, and gives him work to enable him to subsist.

At first the vagabond behaves himself well enough; but one day he takes an old pack of playing cards from the bottom of his knapsack and tempts his comrades into playing for money. As often happens, the players begin with very small stakes; but little by little the passion to gamble seizes them, the stakes grow larger, and Buchuev manages to strip his partners of all that they possess.

From that moment he has only one idea, to get away. But to do this he needs papers, and his papers, according to custom, are deposited with the gang leader Dubinin, who says he will not give them up unless the trickster agrees to repay the penniless men their money. At this, Buchuev seizes an axe and attacks Dubinin, who kills him in self-defence.

Dubinin is arrested, and the police search in vain for the money that the victim must have had in his possession. They begin to suspect the gang leader of having killed the vagabond in order to rob him, and the accused does not manage to put up a strong defence.

While this is going on, the young Leska Malenkin—who had rescued the vagabond from the water—discovers the money hidden in his own mattress. Obviously, Buchuev had chosen that hiding-place. But the young labourer is frightened: will he not be suspected of complicity? Panic-stricken, he ends by throwing the money into the river. What will now become of Dubinin? The reader will never know, for the little novel ends on this note of interrogation.

Why should *Pravda* have reacted so sharply? For, after all, Tendriakov had set out to portray the passion for gambling, and, if he did not succeed as well as a Dostoevski, he has at least given proof of genuine talent. On the moral plane, moreover, there is no doubt that he condemns gambling and the passions that it arouses. Several questions at once present themselves.

First of all, who are these people living in the settlement by the river? Why, these are the good, brave workers, as simple souls as one could wish to see, just like the men you might find in any timber-yard on the banks of the St. Lawrence or the Amazon. And that is just what revolts the official censor. There is nothing about them that singles them out as men of the vanguard, Soviet men. 'They sleep and they work, they work and they sleep'—that is how this author depicts them. They say, 'We have just launched another sputnik', and 'A bear has just attacked an old woman near Kurenevo', in the same tone of voice. Clearly the former event excites them no more than the latter! Their minds are preoccupied, above all, with thoughts of the amount of wages they will be paid for their laborious work. One of them exclaims: 'They have docked us five rubles for one meal! And what was it, that meal? Just slops!'

And the gang leader, this Sasha Dubinin whom they arrest at the end of the story, what sort of a man is he?

> He never tried to develop a taste for reading; no noble passion had ever been kindled in his heart; he had made no discovery of a sublime ideal within himself. He had never known—or if he had, it was only from hearsay and very vaguely—that there have been men of such generosity of soul that they consented, for the sake of their fellow-men, to die at the stake or under torture. The thick walls of underground prisons did not prevent their voices from being heard centuries afterwards. Dubinin began his career as a raft pilot, he finished it as head of a timber-yard; and that was all.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

We would only add that this Dubinin is a worthy fellow, good, and by no means stupid. The simple fact is that he is not the type of the 'positive hero' whom it is obligatory to present as the central figure of any narrative constructed according to the Zhdanov specification.

Tendriakov's novel suggests, moreover, that this kind of 'positive hero' scarcely exists in the Soviet Union, or, at least, is not a common phenomenon. In the little towns and lumber yards along the great river, the people are living more or less courageously at grips with the difficulties of life, and for the most part they are people who laugh, weep, and are neither better nor worse than their compatriots or than the rest of mankind. It is these human qualities, common to all men, that Tendriakov tries to show us by his character-drawing as well as in the particular events of his story.

But that is what the *Pravda's* censors cannot stomach. And so far as we can put ourselves in their place, we can understand why. How could they, without a shudder, read such passages as these:

> A stab with a dagger . . . a tale as old as the world. . . . Two men had a quarrel, and there it is. . . . A hundred, two hundred or a thousand years ago, other Buchuevs have seized a knife or an axe, compelling another to do the same. Will it be like this for ever? Shall we never have done with it?

'Other Buchuevs' . . . 'Shall we never have done with it'—is not this heresy?

By depicting everyday life under the Soviets just as it is in all its reality, is not Tendriakov casting doubt upon values in which the official propaganda takes more pride, perhaps, than in the sputniks? For he is denying, by implication, that Soviet rule has succeeded in fundamentally transforming man, in modifying his soul.

One might say, then, of the work of this young Soviet writer, Tendriakov, that it exemplifies the classic principle discerned by Engels in his analysis of the art of Balzac—namely, that the truth of any authentic writer breaks the bounds of whatever political doctrines he may profess. We are persuaded that Tendriakov, for his part, is honestly attached to the Soviet regime, and even to the Communist Party. All the same, when he sits down to his desk to describe the lives of the 'simple people', certain truths, both general and particular, flow from his pen. 'Who is being accused?' demands *Pravda*, pointing to Tendriakov. Why, he is not accusing anyone. He is only describing, telling a story.

ALEXANDER BLOK

Michael Futrell

THOUGH the rare adept of Russian symbolist poetry might find this first English book about Blok [1] commonplace, for most people interested in Russian poetry (whether with or without knowledge of the language) it will serve as a good introduction to the most outstanding Russian symbolist, whose work far transcends the limitations of any literary school or tendency, who may indeed be understood as the last great romantic poet in European literature. The approach of Sir Cecil Kisch will make a particular appeal to those probably numerous readers who admire the brilliance and intensity of Blok's verse but find its musical allusiveness bewilderingly obscure

[1] Sir Cecil Kisch, *Alexander Blok: Prophet of Revolution*, London, 1960.

—'incomprehensible but altogether exquisite', as the waiter told the poet in Blok's drama *The Unknown Lady*; for the approach here is marked not only by sympathy and understanding but also by straightforward common sense. This book includes an account of Blok's life and work and also a well-balanced anthology of his poetry: *The Twelve*, *The Scythians*, and *The Puppet Show*—all complete; substantial parts of *Retribution*; and, in whole or part, more than fifty of the shorter poems, giving a comprehensive view of the poet's scope and range.

On the whole the translations read well. Sir Cecil is clearly aware of the peculiar difficulties involved, and makes only modest claims for his versions. These are often elegant and attractive, though at times these qualities, and

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the almost inevitable greater wordiness of English, mask the concentration of the Russian; the original of '*The lands whose cold and silence blast me; / No thrills of love or spring redeem*' is simply '*Lands cold, dumb,/Without love, without spring.*' The stark simplicity (inherent in much of Blok's finest poetry) of the Russian knows neither 'blast' nor 'thrills.'

An admirable feature of the book is an index referring the translated poems to the originals in the one-volume edition of Blok's works published in 1946. Inexplicably, however, this index is incomplete; some of the shorter poems and fragments are not included. And, a shortcoming that could mislead a reader without Russian or without a close knowledge of the originals, the author does not always give clear indication in the text of how much has been omitted when a poem is offered only in part.

In accordance with the sub-title 'Prophet of Revolution', the aspects of Blok's writing and personality which justify this label are strongly, and of course correctly, emphasised: disgust at the bourgeois society in which he lived, denunciation of the intelligentsia, awareness of impending cataclysm, welcoming of revolution rapidly followed by disillusionment, and, not least, deep-rooted patriotism. Detailed technical or aesthetic analysis of Blok's verse naturally cannot be expected in a book based on translations; the author might well have referred the reader wanting to investigate this field to the work of Sophie Bonneau. There is an adequate treatment of Blok's relations with his family, and the literary background of the period is sketched in, though the reader unaware of the seething cultural life of Russia's 'silver age' may receive the impression that Blok was more isolated than he really was.

Blok was a remarkable and fascinating personality as well as a great poet; complex and contradictory to the utmost degree, yet dedicated to his intuitive perceptions, and in them uncompromisingly and ruthlessly frank. The common sense and careful judgment displayed by Sir Cecil Kisch in his portrayal of this highly involved creative personality are infinitely preferable to the turgid over-dramatisation that has often marred biographical and critical studies of Russian writers. Yet it must be said that the demonic, self-consuming, almost bewitched nature of Blok at his most incandescent does not quite survive the filtering of this sympathetic reasonableness.

This is noticeable in the presentation of the two women, the actress Volokhova and the singer Delmas, who raised and reduced Blok to the heights and depths of ecstasy and anguish, and directly inspired some of his most dazzling poetic achievements. Sir Cecil quotes some of the comments on Volokhova of Blok's aunt Maria Beketova; for a deeper impression of this, one of the central episodes in Blok's life and creation, one must turn to the monumental compilation of Mochulsky, who effectively juxtaposes Beketova's comments with the less favourable recollections of Bely and with the cry in Blok's notebook: 'Who is she? God or devil?'

Altogether, one feels that Sir Cecil somehow considers it necessary to be apologetic about Blok's personal life. Not that he shies away from it; on the contrary, he quotes in full the ghastly poem *Humiliation*, surely the most waste of all waste lands (though curiously he does not explain his cryptic reference to the well-known passage in Gorky's *Fragments from My Diary*, 'relevant in this context' as he observes). But when he writes that 'the themes may often appear to be unworthy of the elegance and charm with which they are treated' and mentions 'an increasing addiction to some of the less desirable forms of self-indulgence' he is introducing external moralistic notions of doubtful applicability to his subject and to the society in which the latter lived.

Pasternak in some of his last verses finely emphasised the purely elemental and intuitive nature of Blok's poetry: 'He blows like the wind . . .'. It is a little ludicrous to regard certain themes as more or less worthy. When Blok was poetically in tune, he wrote—whether the immediate impulse was the ethereal vision he wove round his wife, the cosmic fate of Russia, the gluttony of the rich, the shoulders of Natalya Volokhova, or the interior of some tawdry brothel. Whatever the theme, as Pasternak wrote, the wind of Blok's poetry cuts 'through ribs to soul'.

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CENTRE D'ÉTUDES DE POLITIQUE ÉTRANGÈRE
54 rue de Varenne — Paris 7ème

POLITIQUE ETRANGERE

La grande revue des questions internationales

No. 5/1960

Marcel COIGNARD	Le problème du contrôle des armements
Gotthold RHODE	La ligne Oder-Neisse et la politique européenne
Robert G. NEUMANN	l'Irak de Kassem
Jacques GUILLERMAZ	Hiérarchie des objectifs de la politique étrangère chinoise
Roger LEVY	Le souvenir de Sun Yat-sen et la République populaire de Chine

Le numéro: 3,80 NF
France et Communauté: 20 NF
Étrangère : 26 NF

Adresser les abonnements au Centre d'études de politique étrangère
54 rue de Varenne — Paris 7ème — C.C.P. 1865-41 Paris

A good way to keep informed about European and World Affairs is to read regularly

EUROPA-ARCHIV

The Journal of the German Council on Foreign Relations

Edited by WILHELM CORNIDES

EUROPA-ARCHIV, now in its 16th year of publication, contains articles and documents on international relations and a current chronology of world events as well as review articles of recent publications.

Articles in recent issues :

Campbell Balfour:	Die britische Arbeiterbewegung und die atomare Bewaffnung
Norbert Welter:	Die Konsolidierung der Europäischen Wirtschaftsgemeinschaft
Georg W. Rehm:	Die internationale Zivilluftfahrtorganisation (ICAO), ihre Probleme, ihre Aufgaben und ihr Wirken
Wilhelm Treue:	Atlantik und Pazifik im Widerstreit
Elis Biörklund:	Die Seekriegführung im Zeitalter globaler Strategie
Andrej Iwanowitsch Jeremenko:	Die strategische und politische Bedeutung von Militärstützpunkten

Annual subscription (24 issues) DM 56.— plus postage. Specimen Copies on request.

DEUTSCHE GESELLSCHAFT FÜR AUSWÄRTIGE POLITIK
Abt. EUROPA-ARCHIV, Frankfurt am Main, Gr. Eschenheimer Str. 16–18

Published on behalf of the Congress for Cultural Freedom and printed in England by The Eastern Press, Ltd., of London and Reading

PRODUCED 2004 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED